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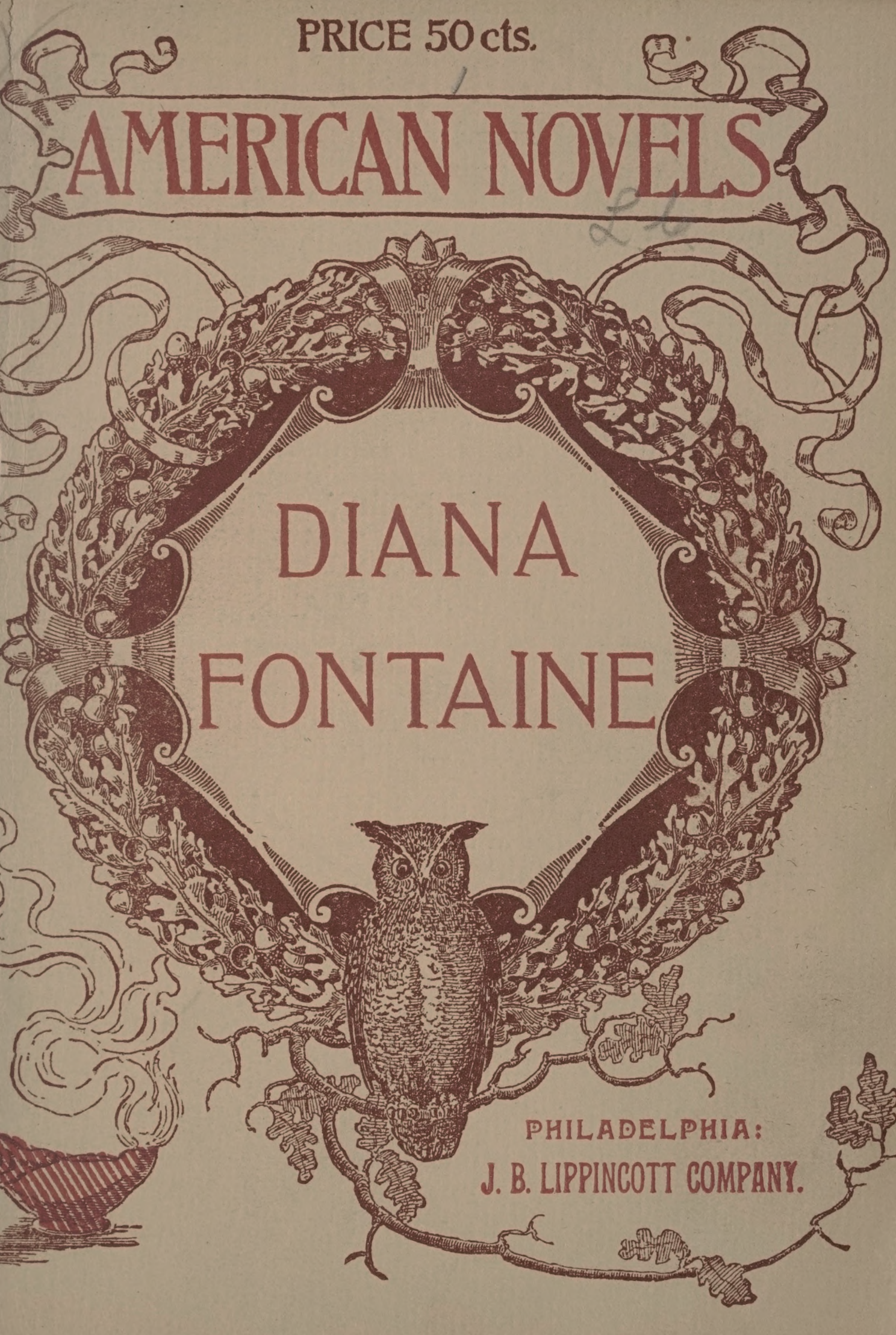

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DIANA FONTAINE.

A NOVEL.

BY

ALGERNON RIDGEWAY.

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TO MY FRIEND I. K. L.,

CHILD BY WINSOME SIMPLICITY, PHILOSOPHER BY REFLECTIVE ABSORPTION OF KNOWLEDGE, WOMAN BY DEVOTEDNESS, MAN BY DEFINITENESS OF PURPOSE, HERO BY STRENGTH, ARTIST BY EXCELLENCE OF WORK, ANGEL BY LOFTINESS OF IDEAL; WHOM TO SEE IS TO REVERENCE; TO MEET, TO REMEMBER; TO KNOW, TO LOVE.

PREFACE.

WORK, when it is the outcome of a love that opens every spring of energy, is love's benison; this is the true union of spirits, of which bodily marriage is but a dim, crude symbol. Such love finds its crown in Renunciation rather than in gratification; it mounts starward, and has the power of quickening into life the artist sheathed within each human being.

DIANA FONTAINE.

CHAPTER I.

DIANA FONTAINE was an orphan. After a year spent with her mother's relatives in Newport, she came to Virginia to spend a year with her father's; after which time her guardian thought she would be ready to take up the burden of life for herself. The word "guardian" was but an honorary title, though; for Miss Fontaine was no heiress. An income of not more than seventy-five dollars a year, a strikingly graceful exterior, a good deal of desultory information, a rare amount of musical feeling and dainty taste constituted this young lady's principal possessions. Her Northern relatives thought that she had what they called "a future" before her, and speculated upon its nature. Her Southern relatives listened with surprise to a girl of eighteen discussing "values" in pictures and "tonic chords" in music; for these Southern relatives lived in the bosom of an illiterate community among the pine barrens of the Shenandoah Valley, and they were not accustomed to young ladies who used foreign words in conversation, and who were characterized by a perhaps too elaborate simplicity.

The third day after her arrival at the Valley Farm, —the Fontaine homestead,—Diana caught herself

wondering how she was going to endure life for the coming twelvemonth. Yet what could she do? Her Newport friends were on the eve of starting to Europe. Why, oh, why, could she not go with them? She had spent a winter in Paris with her father, as a child, and had been his intelligent companion everywhere; but now her life was wholly changed by his death; now must she narrow to the limits of, not an elegant economy, but a vulgar frugality, like the people around her. How wide the range human nature presents, —from the Hessian girl who pronounces guardian, gardeen; who delights in such literature as "Leni-leoti, the Prairie Flower;" who wears, for full-dress, ribbon-bridles about her neck, and black lace mitts upon her hands—all the way up to the daughter of the gentler class. A young woman who wears delicately-fitting gloves; who wafts about her the scent of the finest imported extracts; who reads Victor Hugo in the original; who borrows from the polite languages of Europe those words which embellish her chit-chat; who passes from the charms of a pot-pourri to the subtler uses of *a priori* or *a posteriori;* one who peoples a pretty girlish world of her own with elves, heroes, ambassadors, as her mood may be. Such a girl was Diana Fontaine, her spirit an elixir of fine feeling, caught and imprisoned in human mould.

She was no more a beauty than an heiress; but she had striking points. In her former world, some foreigner had called her arms dramatic, and that same foreigner had compared her to a figure in a Greek frieze. Not that she was pretty,—which implication would seem to follow,—but she was interesting. You always

wanted to see what she was going to do next. Her movements were sudden, picturesque, full of expression, and her arms—hanging loose, or folded under her bosom, or crossed upon her lap, or thrown forward when protesting—suggested a wonderful fecundity of nature.

A fanciful German had once said of her, "When Miss Fontaine dances, walks, speaks, she is a goddess; at other times, she returns to earth an ordinary mortal. I love to see her listen to a rhapsody of Liszt, or a polonaise of Chopin; but when she eats turtle-soup, she's no better than other girls. She has all the inequalities of a piece of mazurka music." This fanciful German was a musician, whose name is famous. He had played for Diana Fontaine, once, and she had responded to his touch as if she herself had been the instrument. He ended by improvising to her; for musicians like to play upon human beings better than upon keys and strings.

Here, on the borders of a miserable village like Pughtown, there was no one, absolutely no one, to sound her praises in pretty speeches. Her solitude was complete. Such was her melancholy reflection as she crossed the foot-bridge that unites the delicious mint-banks on either side the run, and then threaded a sequestered way, betwixt sumach bushes, towards a group of low hills, whose crown of chestnut-oak served as her guide, for she was trying to discover the Echo Rock, which, she had been told, was less than a mile from the farm-house. With one hand she held up her dress, a white lawn prigged with red currants; with the other she swung a shade-hat, such as one buys at

the most approved city milliner's,—a variegated straw, decorated with French currants of exaggeratedly juicy appearance, bunched amid loops of black velvet ribbon.

At first she looked about her languidly, but soon her glance brightened, for she perceived that she had not left beauty far away in the North; no, there was plenty of it here around on every side. A field of timothy between the foldings of the hills swept on one side of her, a mass of gay plumes in the summer sunshine; or here and there, broken into gloom by an overshadowing walnut- or mulberry-tree, it shaded off into the most delicate green tassellings, such as would have suitably bordered the robe of a dryad. Diana stretched up to gather a handsomely-cut leaf from the bough that swung over her head, or stooped to snap off a vine, winding it about her hair; or to pull a clump of daisies that stole into the foot-path from the adjacent field; for, though a woman, she had the tastes of a nymph. "I have read in books," she whispered to herself, "that solitude is a kind of mental chastity. I never realized it before; but I do now. If any one else were here, it would drive my society away."

She descended into a ravine, hemmed in by slate cliffs, and dark with growths of evergreen; then paused, mused, listened to her heart beat. There was an excitement in adjusting her sympathies to this wild spot, after feverish recollections of New York City, and its metropolitan pleasures. Calling Nature a nun, and the ravine a cloister, Diana moved on, but stopped soon again at the base of the cliff, where it stood almost perpendicular, and said within herself, "This must be the Echo Rock, of course. I will see what I can

do to rouse the spirit of sound." Tossing her shade-hat to the ground, and bending back, so to command her voice, she cried aloud, in a piercing tone, "Echo." "Echo" was rung back in a tone clearer and stronger than hers. "How strange!" she thought; "that is not like my voice." Then rebuking herself for expecting a ludicrous imitation of it, like the phonograph, she reminded her imagination that a woodland echo should be delicately poetic, the spirit of a voice, not its ghost, like the prosaic phonograph. One is the sprite Ariel, a nature beautiful, wild, untamed; the other, Caliban, a nature enslaved and man's servant.

"Come," said the girl to herself, "you shall be my playmate. I will be the nymph; you shall be the youth she loved. Narcissus was his name, I think." Thus lending herself to fancy, and placing hand upon hip, she shouted out,—

"Narcissus, my love."

"*My* love," was the return, so rounded and full, that Diana blushed, standing all by herself in the ravine. She felt as if she, the nymph, were apostrophizing this lover too openly; and this thought revolted the modesty of her maidenhood; for a bright, imaginative girl is never quite alone. Her thoughts are witnesses; the air around her lives. The situation, however, was piquant, and she could not resist it.

"I am your friend; who are you?" was her next appeal.

"*Are* you?" came back from the bosom of the hills with thrilling distinctness.

"Yes; are you my friend?" she returned.

"*My friend*," responded the second part in this

dialogue, and with real feeling. Truly, it was uncanny; but Diana kept up the sport. She had been lonely before starting on her walk; now, she was infinitely amused. She would always come here when she was melancholy, this chatty cliff-spirit would cheer her.

"Keep your promise," she cried, with finger on lip.

"*Promise*," rang back.

Evidently the masculine principle of the hills knew how to extract promises as well as she. But Diana laughed, as women will, when asked to keep faith. Deluding creatures! Diana could no more help flirting with the mountain's voice than she could have helped flirting with man himself, had he been present. Her laugh, however, was conscientiously taken up by the cliff, and there followed an answering "Ha! ha!" The rock laughed on in a deep, manly way for a minute, and then silence intervened.

"You are a jolly fellow," said Diana, in her natural tone; then, in a higher key, so as to provoke a reply, "*You* are not love-lorn."

"Love-lorn" was immediately wailed back from the hill, with a jocular imitation of grief.

"Let me console," was the response, a phrase so cunningly arranged that it ensured the answer, "Console," sent back so heartily as to appear a genuine appeal. A dialogue need not be original on both sides to charm. Many a woman has condescended to fall in love with a man who was little more than a flesh and blood echo to her. Sitting down upon a slab of slate, she asked, in high treble, innocently enjoying the advances she felt free to make,—

"Would you like to know my name?"

"*Name,*" was the reply, given authoritatively.

"*Diana,*" was rung back, and then,—

"*Diana,*" repeated the hidden voice, with such a pleasant familiarity; and so near, apparently, that the girl, addressed, sprang up from her seat and looked around startled. What if somebody were concealed in the boscage that clustered, a green patch, on the grayish rock, and were taking advantage of her gullible imagination. She determined to tempt the "somebody" to further speech, so she shouted, with less of fun, perhaps, than excited curiosity, "Come hither."

"*Hither,*" shouted the cliff, this time with a shade of delicate reserve in its voice. Too late. Diana's eyes, now on the alert, descried a large gray spot on the slaty hill-side, under a canopy of tree boughs. The spot moved; and then she knew that it was a man she saw lying flat on the ground, trying to hide himself behind tufts of young growth. As soon as he knew that he had been detected, this man half-rose, creeping along on all-fours until he could reach a more sloping part of the declivity; then he swung himself down to the foot-path in haste, there to find the young lady who had been fluting forth all these pretty speeches. He saw her, however, in a changed mood; she stood in the pathway, her nostrils a-tremble, her fingers daintily holding up one side of her muslin gown. Her fine-tissued cheeks were full of color; her brown hair as full of vines and wild flowers as if she were Ophelia; but there was none of the insane maiden's glance in the direct eyes which held in them a spark of indignation. She was wroth with the intruder.

She would punish his impertinence, so she stood ready to discharge a look which should be an arrow, and then turn her back and walk away in the silence of disdain. But after her eyes had rested for a few moments upon the tall, awkward man with slouching gait who now fronted her, she felt her anger merge into a kind of pleased curiosity. He had sprung down the sides of the cliff with joints of elastic. How did he contrive to wind those long legs through the undergrowth without getting them into a hopeless tangle? That this man was no boor, Diana recognized at once. Good breeding is as quickly discerned by the well-bred as if it were a badge worn on the sleeve. The interloper was ugly, to be sure; but then Nature does not caress every man into beauty; sometimes she gives him a knock instead of a pat; but a woman, however æsthetic, does not object to ugliness in the other sex, provided there is character in the ugliness. There was a great deal of character in the weather-beaten face now turned upon the young lady, and a great deal of honest, boyish mirth in the smile that accompanied the words,—

"Excuse me, miss. Miss ——: I reckon I can call you Miss Diana. You told me your name, you remember?"

Diana did remember, and laughed. There was an easy-going, respectful friendliness in the man's manner which attracted her. She would not have questioned his gentlemanhood so quickly as she would have done that of the dudish Newporter who had taken her and her cousins out in his yacht. The new-comer, crushing a felt hat against his chest in a rather ludicrous way,

proceeded to make his apology with a mingling of shyness and frankness just a little dashed with mischief.

"Excuse me, Miss Diana, for playing at echo. It was mighty bad manners; but it was irresistible. You were so friendly, indeed I could not help it. Then I had to try my vocal powers, which you complimented by mistaking them for a sure-enough echo; afterwards I felt ashamed at having fooled you so well, and I determined you should never be the wiser; but you were too quick, so I came down to beg your pardon; and, if you will allow me now, I will show you the real Echo Rock?"

"Then this is not Echo Rock, and *none* of the echoes were real ones?" She knew that she had been cheated, but not how much.

"Nature has not deceived you, but wicked man," was the answer to her half incredulous look. "I confess the fraud; but let me make amends, and show you the real rock; it is only a few hundred yards from here. The path which crosses this one at the mulberry-tree, a short distance back, would have led you to it direct; in which case, however, we should never have had this meeting,—a very agreeable incident to me, Miss Fontaine."

Diana, rooted in the pathway, no longer cared for the echo now: it seemed to her a childish amusement. In proof of which change in her opinions, she began to strip herself of the vines clinging to hair, neck, and waist; while she murmured something about men having their rights and women being defrauded of theirs. Her pettishness was winsome, and her voice, trilling upon a querulous F sharp, elicited a smile from

her companion. Both words and change of mood conveyed a challenge, but found him indulgent. He answered with deference, while his full gray eyes kindled within their deep sockets,—

"Woman is entitled to all the rights of man, and one more,—his protection. I would like to do you a service to show that I did not wantonly intrude upon your solitude, Miss Fontaine."

Diana was conciliated by the unexpectedly chivalrous manner of this great, loose-jointed, long-legged fellow, who carried his ugliness as proudly as the ten-tined stag does his symmetry; and who, in spite of a humorous appearance of shyness, produced a wonderful effect of strength and animal magnetism. "Pray, how do you know that my name is Fontaine?" she inquired, waiving the subject of Echo Rock and leaning against a tree to invite conversation.

"Partly by instinct. Besides, I have heard of Billy Fontaine's granddaughter, brought up in New York, and coming on a visit to Pughtown. Partly by inference. I know the young ladies within a radius of ten miles,—and I knew you were none of these."

The warmth of a broad, yet kindly sympathy lit up the young man's rude features, making them almost handsome, as his glance took in, with the alertness peculiar to observant minds, the delicate fingers, the finely-tissued web of skin of this young lady who fronted him, with chin eagerly lifted. She was pleased at making a new acquaintance; indeed, there was a vivacious sense of mutual inquisitiveness between them. Plainly, the graft upon the old Fontaine stock had produced a new, and, it must be confessed, charming

variety. How did the inward match the outward qualities? The keenest eyes do not fathom this with a glance.

"I am less fortunate," she replied, "for you do not carry your name upon your face, as I appear to do." Her chin, her tone, her eyes were interrogative.

"Loughborough (Luffborough)," was the brief answer.

"Are you the doctor whose sign I saw in the village when riding in for the mail?"

Loughborough bowed. He had observed the young lady ride into Pughtown on one of Grat Fontaine's farm-horses, and had thought it a thousand pities that such a well-formed girl should ride so badly, and be mounted on so rough a cob.

"Speaking of names, Miss Fontaine, yours seems sacred to fiction. I never met a real Diana before: those of romance were wonderfully clever, you know?"

Of course she knew. Miss Fontaine was fantastically literary; but she had a rich vein within, sometimes obscured, sometimes apparent. She was not commonplace; perhaps too capricious. You never knew quite how to take her; but she was saved from eccentricity and affectation by a strain of sincerity and tact. The bearer of the pretty name could find no excuse for offence at the compliment, which implied admiration of herself without being grossly personal; for Diana, like most women, doated on phrases and compliments, if these last were not too pointed.

"You like my name? Yes, I believe the Dianas of fiction *have* been clever,—Diana Vernon and the *great* Diana. But you make me discontented with my name,

Dr. Loughborough, for I shall be a noticeable exception to your rule of clever women."

Loughborough shook his head, but looked amused. There is something pathetic in the beseeching glance with which young girls sue for compliments. It is a touching pantomime, because the outcome of instincts, as the nibbling of tid-bits is a part of the squirrel's or the wren's.

"My father was in Europe when I was born," she gravely explained, as if she were some personage in history. "On his return from a celebrated gallery, he wrote my mother a letter, in which he said, 'If I were to choose a model from the statues, I would have Niobe for my mother, Venus de Medici for my sweetheart, Venus de Melos for my wife; but one of the Dianas should be my daughter.' So I was christened Diana."

"A charming story. So you are modelled upon Diana. Are you cold, like marble, or cruel, like that classic virgin?"

Loughborough speculated. There was something disturbing in this young girl, with her imagination nourished upon romance, her voice steeped in the honey of the subtlest culture. She was different from the women he had been accustomed to. They might be excellent daughters, obedient wives; but their lukewarm minds, occupied with preserve-making, protracted meetings, or trips to town for small shopping, failed to agitate. Here was a girl who kept you strung up; one who floated in an atmosphere of golden sheen like Turner's pictures. Even Pughtown seemed irradiated with it. The cows seeking shade under a pig-nut

tree in the field, the sumach berries slowly ripening in the sun, the slate rocks mellowed with the afternoon brilliancy, all were full of superb suggestion.

"Cold," echoed Diana, with the slightest possible shiver, as if she felt the word; "cold is negative; heat positive. No, I would be in a glow, Dr. Loughborough. Warmth is life. I love life."

She wreathed her supple arms about her brown-braided head, and looked upwards towards the great terminal blue of the July firmament as if she would crown herself with the gladdening immortality we all aspire to.

"The passionate heart alone is pure," murmured Loughborough, placing his hat on his head and turning away from his companion, as if he feared to feed his susceptibilities longer upon her eloquent motions. He was the first to realize that they were playing with fire, and that they had best lay down the dangerous plaything.

Woman is more recklessly indiscreet than man. The siren that hid in the depths of Diana's eyes stirred and emitted one single alluring glance. She had trembled more than once upon the verge of love, but had been whisked away before getting the desired taste. She longed to transgress the bounds of a narrow experience, as Rasselas longed to emerge from his happy valley. She, too, desired ardently, though half unconsciously, as maidens do, to look into Love's face, once, at least, as Psyche, immortal maid, yearned to look into Cupid's.

They walked along silently for a while on the way to the farm-house, surprised at the rapid stride they

had taken towards acquaintanceship; but etiquette is an artificial fetter, and out of doors is thrown to the winds. Diana felt herself steal into a shy intimacy with this lumbering, ugly man at her side, who looked down upon her with that large-hearted indulgence of glance which wins all natures, from the dog's up. She felt that she could trust herself wholly with him. His very ugliness fascinated. It seemed to be the man's prerogative, and was accompanied by conscious energy.

"Do you know, Dr. Loughborough," she began, in a burst of näive confidence, as they sauntered along past the sumach bushes which shut them in from the timothy field, "I thought, somehow, that Virginia was much grander than it is. I am disappointed in it."

"What is the matter with Virginia, Miss Fontaine? Is it the mountains you do not like? Is not the Blue Ridge grand enough for you? Or is it the North Mountain that fails to come up to your standard?"

Loughborough's irony was usually of the wholesome kind, and curative, like his surgeon's knife.

"Oh, the Blue Ridge is all right, and the North Mountain. It is not the scenery, I mean, but the people, and their ways, and their houses."

Loughborough shed a keen glance from the corner of his eye upon the nymph at his side. He could well understand that Pughtown and its surroundings were alien to the sympathies of a young woman who read French as well as English, who aimed at classic poses, and who prided herself upon the purest enunciation of her native tongue. Nevertheless, he feigned obtuseness.

"What is lacking in our people, in their ways, and in their houses?"

"Why, I thought the people were of English descent; instead of which most of them are German. I expected to see Colonial houses, with old portraits and silver; people whose ancestors had signed the Declaration, or had discovered the Valley under Spottswood; women who entertain delightfully; men who quote Latin and are daring horsemen."

Diana broke off abruptly; she was quite overcome with anger, that the people should be so different from what she had expected.

"Have you seen the men about here ride? If you have, you will certainly find no fault with their horsemanship."

Loughborough's championship was for those who needed it. He was no renegade Virginian, and must take up the cudgels against this young critic, strenuous for her tastes.

He asked abruptly,—

"Have you seen your uncle, Grat Fontaine, ride?"

"What should he ride? We have nothing on the farm but wretched, old work-horses," she laughed, sarcastically. Young women expect to find their world as perfectly appointed as a drawing-room.

"Do you know why? Those horses you call wretched have done years of gallant service during the war. Who has a right to look wretched, if not they? Who has a better right to be wretched than we, their masters, —a nation of conquered men? And yet you laugh at us."

Diana grew serious; she had not thought of things in this way before. She had looked for Virginia to step forth upon the stage of her life, figuring in a

comedy, among bugle-notes; instead of which, Loughborough represented her as a fallen queen, in tragedy, not comedy, and surrounded, not by bugle-notes, but by drum-beats, that ushered in disaster and defeat. She had a fertile fancy, and she listened attentively for what her new acquaintance should say next. She had never felt strongly about anything in her life except her own vexations; now, however, she was pricked with real curiosity about something that was national. To her the war had been the subject of newspapers, the cause of lint-making, sanitary fairs, vituperation of Southern relatives, and a show of Union colors; now, however, fully grown, standing on Southern soil, under the shadow of Loughborough's coat of Confederate gray, and thrilled by his solemn enthusiasm, the war suddenly arose to the majesty of history. Marlborough, Napoleon, and Cæsar had in turn touched her sensitive, virgin soul; why not Lee, Jackson, Stuart, and Ashby?

Loughborough intended they should. He spoke of them, and made Diana thirst for the heroism of the old war-times, in which man, woman, child, horse, each had played his part.

"Have you seen Captain McElroy ride, Miss Fontaine? He is an Arab on horseback. He was with your uncle in Ashby's brigade; and I tell you they made some brilliant charges." (Diana had caught a glimpse of McElroy when going to Pughtown for the mail, and she had pronounced him gentleman-like.) "He was unhorsed at Manassas," Loughborough went on. "I saw him kneeling on the ground beside the dying beast that he loved as a younger brother. It

was in the midst of these lines, said into the poor animal's drooping ear,—

> 'Woe worth the chase! woe worth the day,
> That cost thy life, my gallant gray——'

that a Yankee tapped him on the shoulder, with the order, 'Get up, sir; you are my prisoner.'" .

Diana was amazed. Her Newport friends had smiled at the "Rebs." She, too, had come to think them either very mistaken or very commonplace. But now Loughborough glorified them! Were these youths, many of whom had never been to college, and most of whom could not speak decent English, were they really heroes, after all?

"There is not a boy in this valley, Miss Fontaine, who could not tell tales that would thrill you."

Loughborough was not a man of abundant conversation, nor was he given to much quotation of poetry, but he murmured, as they walked along, Diana's gown making a silver shirr against the thick growths of timothy,—

> "Years sung by the mouths of the round-lipped cannon,
> Hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted years."

"Go on, Dr. Loughborough," interrupted Diana; "what you say does me good. It makes me feel so intensely living; but does all seem like a hideous dream to you, now that it is over?"

Loughborough shook his head.

"I had feelings then that I shall never have again.

Oh, the horrors of the Hotchkiss shell! Shall I ever forget its shriek? Men were killed by the wind it made, that was hideous; but there was a tuneful singing of the minnies that I remember with sensations of delight, sometimes, when I would be lying in the trenches. Once I caught the pitch of a minnie as it swung over my left ear. It swelled from E flat to F, then it receded to D,—so."

Loughborough whistled a cadence by way of illustration. Diana caught the strain from his lips, and transposed it to a different key upon her own.

"Ah," she exclaimed the next minute, with extreme sadness, "what am I? A creature totally without experiences. No one can be poetic without them."

Her companion could not forbear a laugh at the discomfiture in her countenance and the discontent in her voice.

"Experiences have to be purchased dear," he said. "Your grandfather, Squire Fontaine, as he was called about here, paid for his with life. But you know the story, of course?"

Diana shook her head; she did not know it!

Loughborough looked surprised.

"Squire Fontaine was as handsome and stately an old gentleman as ever I laid eyes on. You would have thought that the Yankees might have respected his white hairs, and left him undisturbed. But a squad of Blues met him one night, the first year of the war, riding out of Winchester. They ordered him to dismount and give up his horse. This he did without a murmur. But a ten-mile walk home was too much for a man of seventy, who during his whole lifetime

had never gone outside his farm except in the saddle. He went to bed that night as usual, but no one saw him alive again. He died in sleep, they suppose. Some say of a broken heart; others, of mortification or over-fatigue. They do not know which; but he was a loss to this community. Your grandfather was a man of force, and greatly respected all through this country, Miss Fontaine."

Diana's mind was not the abode of hardened convictions. It was tender to sentiment; and herein lay her power. Loughborough recognized and played upon this susceptibility. He thought she would be a charming girl without her self-consciousness and her passion for the æsthetic, which she had not as yet learned to fortify with judgment. He pursued a little sarcastically,—

"If you want Colonial houses, old portraits, silver, and such bawbles, Miss Fontaine, you should go to middle or eastern Virginia; the Valley may be outdone in elegance, though not in bravery."

They stepped across the foot-bridge, Loughborough leading the way; and as Diana caught glimpses of the farm-house through the willows, and of the rocky road that led up the hill past the wood-pile, where Wesley, the colored boy, leaned on his axe with all the meditative solemnity of Hannibal among the ruins of Carthage, she felt that everything was changed, somehow. And yet could you have found a less significant habitation than this hip-roofed farm-house, no less than three cottages joined to each other, like three little sisters, all wearing white aprons, holding hands and squatting down upon a plot of grass not too well kept.

The first of these cottages had received Billy Fontaine (hero of Loughborough's tale) and his bride in the beginning of the century; the additions having been made for the convenience of the twelve children who overgrew the narrow bounds of the primitive house-place. Never did roof-tree protect a more choleric old Whig than this Billy, who went to the Legislature whenever he wanted, fought innovation, then came back to his rocky nest among the pine barrens of Frederick, and had it out there with such of his neighbors as did not happen to be of his opinion, but who, nevertheless, sat down with him on the long low porch; and, with feet raised to the top of the porch-rails, and tobacco in mouth, talked, wrangled, and made-up, for the period of half a century.

At the palings, Loughborough took his leave with the word,—

"With your permission, I will call before long, Miss Fontaine."

When he was gone, Diana leaned against the gate and mused. While Loughborough was talking, she saw the old homestead transfigured. She had begun to appreciate it by a kind of reflex action, her mind warmed by tales of action; but, now that he was gone and his tales turned into the chill of mere memories, she began to feel the meagreness, the utilitarian primness and the poverty of the place settle down upon her. Her fancy had soared, now it dropped on leaden wings. She counted the newspapers islanded on the shed-roof of the porch, and holding layers of peach-leather spread out to dry; or quarters of summer-apples undergoing the same desiccating process. The win-

dow-sills of the upper story were yellow with tomatoes, set there by a careful hand to ripen more quickly than in the shady garden. What mattered it to Diana Fontaine that this sun-dried store was destined to fill up gaps in winter meals. Economy, foresight, prudence, were to her like the sage-leaf, the lavender, the parsley,—very good for seasoning, but only of a dried-up, turkey-stuffing value. No; give her love, heroism. These were the gorgeous flowers of a summer garden not destined to season a dinner-dish, but born to be of immortal beauty. She was as unconscious of the pies that were intended to eke out next winter's dinners as the peach-leather and apple-slices that were going to make them. The grass-plot around the house was not even adorned with flowers, she thought with a sigh. A damask rose in the corner of the fence, and a parcel of bee-hives on the opposite side under an althea bush, gave evidence that there was a wide disparity in the views entertained by Miss Mary Jane Fontaine and her niece as to the essentials of life.

"Well, honey, 'mos' ready for tea?"

The voice which broke in upon Diana's rather discontented reverie was her aunt's; for Miss Mary Jane appeared in the doorway of the first cottage, clad in a lilac lawn.

"Tea!" ejaculated Diana, amazed. "Why, it's only five o'clock."

"Yes, honey; but Ailsie has been busy making pies, and I've been putting up ketch-up, and your uncle's in from the field, and I thought we'd have a bite good and early, so's all hands 'round could rest."

Tea was an occupation, and not a disagreeable one,

either, at Miss Mary Jane Fontaine's table, where the milk was half cream, the honey made under your very eyes in the garden outside, the smoked sausage hot with pepper, and the crispest frying; the flannel-cakes of the perfectest tint of yellow brown, like the cheek of a Cuban lady.

"Very well. I am ready for tea: I believe I always am."

Diana unfastened the gate and entered. To her Miss Mary Jane Fontaine was an anomaly; while to Miss Mary Jane, Diana was a prodigy, a creature over whom to clasp your hands and to shake your head, if you should happen to be demonstrative. Miss Mary Jane was not. She was past fifty-four, and had never been young. Her pleasures, like her sweet pickle, contained the faintest suspicion of sweet enveloped in as mild an acid. Even her sorrows were more a dreariness that clogged the spirits that an overmastering emotion which scorched. The generation to which she belonged had been characterized by double appellatives, such as David-Henry, John-William, George-Frederick, Marthy-Alice, Mary-'Liza, and Sarah-Jane, which must account for the fact that the elder Miss Fontaine's name appeared under the form of doublets, both of them conscientiously adhered to. This was an advance upon the preceding generation, which rejoiced in the Scriptural name; and it was a half-way house between the last and the modern elegance of titles, such as Be-*at*-rice, Lu-*i*-sa, Law-ra, Beu-lah, Io-ta, and the like, which showed the young girls now growing up in the valley to be lusty damsels skipping out of a fourth- or fifth-rate novel. Miss

Mary Jane's views of the world consisted of single isolated notions. She did up the Italians in a single line, such as might fit into a kiss-paper. To her they were all revengeful. Had she been imaginative, she would have conceived of them as a nation of poison-takers. The Spaniards were all swarthy, not a blue eye to be found in the nation. She had every Frenchman "unreliable from A to Izzard;" while all heathen, from the beginning of the world up to the present day, were as much alike as black-eyed peas or pewter spoons; for variety as a quality was unrecognized by the elder Miss Fontaine, and history a thing to be epitomized. Her niece's literary tastes were of the calendar style; her own were of the weighty. She had read Dr. Jay, Richard Baxter, Dr. Taylor, Fox's "Book of Martyrs," and advised Diana to take up "Conversations on Chemistry." To her, piety was shown by muteness, negation, and sedateness. Everybody, however, has light tastes tucked away somewhere, and when Miss Mary Jane desired to regale this part of her nature, she read the religious newspaper and the older numbers of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, stacked up in the front parlor under her father's portrait. Everybody must possess some sentiment. Miss Mary Jane's did not show in her literature nor in her conversation; but it lurked somewhere,—upstairs in the bureau-drawer, where a daguerrotype lay cradled in the only lace handkerchief which this lady had ever possessed, and which had been sent her from Paris by Diana's father. The Parisian lace had seemed to her a little wicked, thus wantonly displayed upon a handkerchief; but she guarded it none the less with a timid reverence. In

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the closet under the stairway, where the beam was so low that it hit your head as you entered, was another keepsake,—an ashes-of-roses silk dress, the present, also, of Diana's father, made and worn when she was just twenty-one; but it was as good to-day as when it was new, nothing of the excellent material having altered with thirty years of hanging,—save the style. In the Bible on the bureau of Miss Mary Jane's bedroom was still another keepsake,—a very private and personal one,—a lock of sandy hair tied by a blue ribbon to a four-leaved clover and a geranium leaf. This keepsake antedated the ashes-of-roses gown. The geranium leaf was yellow, the clover leaf brittle; but, mark you, not a bit was broken off. The blue ribbon was faded and ugly, but this ghostly love-knot was more beautiful to Miss Mary Jane Fontaine's eyes than anything that the sun's light shone upon.

"Aunt Mary," said Diana, following her aunt into the dining-room, "what sort of a man is Dr. Loughborough?"

"Ask your uncle Grat, honey; they were in the war together, same company." Miss Mary Jane's nature was to avoid a direct answer to any question.

"But is he of a good family?" insisted Diana.

"Your uncle calls them Bourbons." Burbons, she pronounced it.

"I thought they were French people. Is he of a French family?"

"Not as I know, honey."

"Then what do you mean?" persisted Diana.

"You'll have to ask your uncle."

In Miss Mary Jane's mind the woman's prerogative

was to be absolutely ignorant of everything not domestic.

"Something about letting things stay as they are, and not trying to make them better; your uncle doesn't like to work with the Burbons; I've heard him say he can't pull with them," explained Miss Mary Jane, pitying her niece's puzzled look.

"Is Dr. Loughborough a fine physician?" she asked, suddenly, after an interval of musing.

"He's called in to the Kapper neighborhood, and to the Purcells, way off on Timber Ridge."

"Why did he come here to practise in Pughtown, if he is a fine physician?" demanded Diana, a little spitefully.

"Why, there was no other doctor on this circuit." Miss Mary Jane's Methodism leaked out in her reply. "And Dr. Fawnystawk is too infirm to be the navigator he used to be." Miss Mary Jane's conception of the height of elegance was to indulge in words with tails to them. She volunteered another piece of information. "He is engaged to Lou-i-sa Fawnystawk."

"Lou-i-sa Faw-ny-stawk. Good heavens! what a name!" gasped Diana with difficulty, as she was in the very act of swallowing a wedge of flannel-cake saturated with honey.

Just then the outer door opened and Grat Fontaine, recently emerged from a hand- and face-bath in the wooden piggin outside, entered the room and took his seat at the table.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT is called in the Alps a Pass, becomes in the White Mountains a Notch; in the Catskills, a Clove, and in the Blue Ridge, a Gap. Details of scenery may differ, but certain characteristics prevail common to the natural feature. Sometimes the stream, seeking its outlet through the channel it cuts between mountain masses, rushes along in white rage through a stern gorge, such as we find upon the Simplon Pass; sometimes it breaks through rocky barriers in a multitude of jaunty leaps, ending in the saucy beauty which fascinates the beholder in the Falls of the Cauterskill Clove; sometimes there is only a gentle creek, cooing and dimpling in infantine sweetness over white pebbles, as in the gaps of the Little North Mountain. But the infantile sweetness is deceptive; for, after a heavy rainfall, these diminutive creeks swell, fret against their stony beds and overflow them, bringing serious damage in their track.

In the neighborhood of Teller's Gap, with its couple of charming runs spread like watered ribbons through the windings of the hills, stands Pughtown, at the confluence of four turnpike roads, of which one trends towards Winchester, and thence, over Snicker's Gap, into the Piedmont country; one, over the Ridge into Hampshire; one, down the Valley, and one, north, into Maryland and Pennsylvania.

In the early years of this century the convenience of its position brought Billy Fontaine to Pughtown, and

Fate kept him there. In those days it was a thriving village, with a prospect; now it is an elaborate mud-puddle, damned to hopeless insignificance. Then it counted two ordinaries, wherein coaches were quartered; for there was no end of travellers bound for Baltimore and Philadelphia; or emigrants on their way to Ohio and the great West, who journeyed along this road, and stayed overnight, bringing news to the little post-town from the outside world. Much of the iron and salt going West was carried through Pughtown on horseback. Indians from North Carolina came hither and pitched their tents for a night's rest upon the clean and wholesome hill-sides; and pedlers were not wanting in this caravansary. There were brilliant days, too, when the militia turned out, booted and cockaded, making hearts to leap in the bosoms of the Fontaine girls.

Alas! how changed from all this bustle and variety was the Pughtown of Diana Fontaine's experience. The northwest grade struck it a blow from which it never recovered; then the locomotive's whistle sounded its crack of doom. The "Dragon's Ordinary" meekly closed its doors and acknowledged itself vanquished by the modern knight, Sir Steam. The tavern, also losing its reputation for beaten biscuit and fried chicken, grew sullen, sad, and, at last, reformed, being converted from a noisy, roystering public-house into a cobbler's shop. Pughtown was become a lonely spot, from which people endeavored to get away, or to which they only came to make stump speeches at election times. The long, straggling street was become the property of hogs, and the mere sound of coach-wheels drew the

inhabitants to their doors to see what eccentric intruder might be visiting them in the depth of their seclusion.

Billy Fontaine had figured very considerably in those old days when Pughtown was looked upon as a growing place. He trusted the people and they trusted him; for all that he was such a shrewd man, with an eye to making a competency out of the roughest and rockiest of soils for the twelve children who sprang up about him. He and his wife were a frugal pair; but Billy was handsome and popular and given to visiting the tavern, where, with mug of brandy and water in hand, he would discuss the doings in the State Senate with some friend he was sure to find there, or he would salute the ladies with the smiling air of a man who realizes that he is the personage of supreme importance in the place where he lives. And this was the truth. Billy Fontaine had some enemies, to be sure; but he was a big man in that neighborhood that begins with Hunting Ridge and runs back into the county where pines are thickest and farms scarcest. They were not so scarce, however, but what there were men enough to swear by Billy when he wanted constituents at elections; or women enough to say, with unanimous voice, "Billy Fontaine, he were a man that were a man; yes, indeedy, that he were. He's got the brains, if anybody's got 'em."

Fontaine used to say, on his return from the meetings of the Legislature, "The Valley, why it is the gard*ene*-spot of the whole world; a land overflowing with milk and honey. The vineyards,—look at them; they bear grapes in clusters like unto the grapes of Eshcol." The canny farmer had several ways of talk-

ing. When he wished to make an impress, as he said, on the methodistical community in whose bosom he dwelt, he turned on the scriptural oratory, which, bearing the sacred seal, carried conviction. In the State Senate of Richmond he turned on a very different oratory, a florid rhetoric in vogue with the men who, fifty years back, delighted in Tupper, English parliamentary debates, and the poetasters of George III.'s time. He made allusions to the fair sex, flung off long relative clauses rich in Latin quotations, outlandishly pronounced, which nobody understood, but which imparted a pungent importance to his remarks. When the time came, however, for a dry, shrewd, cutting speech, without Latinisms or palaver concerning the fair sex, trust me, but Billy Fontaine could make it as well as any man who ever used good old Saxon English. He could tell a man, in the most strenuous words of the vernacular, what his duty was, and to "go and be damned if he didn't get along ahead and do it." He belonged to that class of men who, in the spirit of Patrick Henry and the Constitution, would rather have seen the Union fly into a million pieces than see State independence injured by one jot or tittle. People did not talk in those days of individualism *versus* nationalism; yet, practically, Billy was an individualist, an enlightened individualism being in his mind the nearest approach to true freedom. It was well he did not live to see States-Rights a dead letter; his heart would have broken, all the same; but there would have been larger throes and longer scorchings.

Even his high-stepping granddaughter, Diana, admitted, in Pughtown's degenerate days, that "here

was a country fit to be called the garden-spot of the world,—if—if,"—and she sighed often enough; for a fiery imagination despises the utilitarianism that grovels, and youth longs for converse with other souls.

But the land was fair, her eyes declared. The hills were like elder sisters to the valleys, caressing them with the velvet touch of deep soft grass; the farm-steads were set in the foldings of the ridge-lands like shrines; instead of bare cliffs, there were knolls crowned with trees, many of them stately, such as maples, oaks, chestnut, hickory, and walnut. It was a country made for squirrels, and ground-bunnies, and barefooted boys, to judge from the wealth of nuts that deep-bosomed, mellow-eyed Autumn hung out upon the trees. One found here much of the vegetation and coloring which one sees in the plain of Lombardy, and in the richly-fruited valleys of the Apennines, the gold-colored haze, the purple shadows along the hill-slopes, and bending over the whole the most graciously, tenderly blue sky that can be imagined.

When asked, the young lady explained, without the least reluctance, that her "if comprehended the people. They were common and illiterate; they had no *savoir-vivre*. Why, they were nothing but Hessians, not descendants of English cavaliers, like the Fontaines," and her dainty nose frequently lifted itself in order to sniff in a rarer atmosphere than that inhaled by the heavier Dutch nostrils around her. To speak truly, the Fontaines had been strongly tinctured by the Hessian element which runs, like a streak of lean in fat bacon, from Pennsylvania through Page, Augusta,

Shenandoah, and Frederick. Neighbors to the Fontaines were Spanglers, Winkers, Hefflebowers, Stottlemyers, Swartzes, Funkhausers, Spitzers, Lionbergers, and a sprinkling of Dunkards.

These Hessians have a history. Burgoyne said wittily, at the close of the Revolutionary War, that he could force his way through woods, but not through —Gates. In his surrender that followed, a number of Hessians were delivered over to General Gates, who placed them in barracks somewhere on the Pughtown pike. While awaiting parole, General Morgan employed them to build a country-house in Clarke County, called Saratoga, in honor of the battle gained by the Americans, and in which the Hessians had been forced to lay down their arms. When the time came for an exchange of prisoners, the Hessians refused to leave the Valley, which they now adopted as their motherland.

Foreigners and mercenaries in the pay of the British government at first, they became afterwards children of the soil which they had made a vain effort to conquer. To this day they are a simple, frugal people, with but little of the native Virginian about them. The women spin, the men farm; and they live shut away by mountains, in the midst of a thrift which might benefit any neighborhood, were it not for the narrow-minded sordidness and ignorance characterizing them.

Were they or were they not picturesque? Diana could not decide. They were primitive, to be sure, and life with them was as much of a pastoral as with Paul and Virginia in the Isle of France. "Early candle-

lighting" was announced from the pulpit as the hour for prayer-meetings. Men designated their wives and daughters with crude sarcasm as "the 'omen-folks or doman-folks." The beauty of the village was described as "a likely-faceted young 'oman, neat-limbed as the Greenbrier heifer." This was a community living in almost unbroken seclusion, emerging from the home-valley only for court-days and shows. They had never seen a real, live Catholic. Episcopalian was a word interchangeable with Bourbon, applicable to a monstrosity of worldliness; a creature who put on airs; one who had rabid notions about *family*, and who wished to gobble up the rights of humanity. John Knox did not eye the sovereign lady of the house of Stuart with more distrust than these Pughtowners did Diana Fontaine,—a city girl, an Episcopalian, a young lady who rode or walked into the village for the mail with a simple muslin, not unlike theirs, but worn—how differently. There are things too subtle to be described by words: you can only feel them.

The Pughtown maidens, dully conscious of inferiority when they saw the muslin-robed damsel pass the post-office, would cry, "Is that all New York City can do? Pughtown can do as good as that. Why, Miss Fontaine, she can't hold a candle to Lou-i-sy Fawny-stawk."

But the young men were less censorious; the damsel, in her airy lawn gown, without gloves, and with a broad-brimmed hat shading a piquant nose and saucy chin, gave a little electric shock to their slow wits when she floated past. "By Joseph!" they would say, with an admiring glance; "she's as peart an'

sassy-looking as a little F. F. V." And though they had but little reverence for the F. F. V. in the abstract, they were convertible to this particular specimen of elegant girlhood, whom, however, they were too bashful to approach.

One sultry afternoon, Miss Fontaine, appearing on the edge of the village, was ogled by its female inhabitants through closed shutters. Captain McElroy, catching glimmers of her muslin skirt from betwixt the maple-trees shading the rustic academy upon the hill, emerged from a yawn, dismissed the school-children, stretched his legs, and measured the declivity with unusual briskness. Some one else was ahead of him, however, for Algy Swartz, a dark-visaged young man, with an uneasy stiffness about arms and knees, stood in the post-office porch, holding the Fontaine mail in his hand, and waiting to hand it over to the charming carrier, with as much eagerness as if his life depended upon the contents of those red-wafered letters.

"Here's your mail, miss," said Algy Swartz, with deferential shyness, feeling that his arms and legs were no longer of the slightest use to him, when Miss Fontaine, halting in front of the one-storied building, tilted her shade-hat and allowed a play of feature to dazzle him completely. He felt unequal to the occasion, as if he had been singed and blackened by that bright flame which still played on, gaining beauty and brilliancy by everything it fed on.

Algy was a slow and silent fellow, "who did not take much stock in gals," as his kinspeople said; but "who kept up a devil of a-thinkin'." He was accustomed to the clumsy coquetry and bashful amorous-

ness of the Pughtown maidens, so he found something unexpected and exciting in Miss Fontaine's playing features and sparkling, "Thanks, Mr. Swartz: how kind!" If she had given him a decanter of champagne, he could not have turned giddier than when she pronounced those words, "Thanks, Mr. Swartz. You have given me just what I want most." Swartz could have died on the spot; his tongue became absolutely useless. Captain McElroy coming up the next minute, with his air of handsome indolence, was at once a refuge and an odious interruption.

This poetic-looking pedagogue was primed for conquest. "Might he accompany Miss Fontaine home, and hold the parasol while she read her letters?" "Oh, yes; but the letters would keep," and, playing with those imposingly-sealed envelopes, the crisp muslin dress whirled round about and floated back in the direction whence it had come, a striped parasol held over its wearer's head by Captain McElroy.

"Well, I think in my heart, if that brazen piece hasn't caught a beau a'ready," was whispered through closed blinds. "Great Scott! an' if she hasn't been an' tacked the cap'n on to her pettycoatie tails!"

This exclamation was all but smothered in the throat of Miss Vanessa Spangler, a young lady whose father owned the Still-house, and who herself laid claims to the fascinating captain.

"I'll up and ride over to Fontaine's myself inside the hour, and ketch them two flirtacious ones; see if I don't."

Miss Vanessa was as good as her word. In a half-hour she had made an out-and-out toilette, to judge

from her rattling skirts as she appeared in the back-room of the house, where the family sat during the warm hours of the day, and asked whether she could have the horse for the rest of the afternoon. Of course, no Pughtown lady ever walked when she could ride, it not being the usage of the place; and there are to be found no people on the face of the earth more punctilious in such matters of etiquette as their code has laid down. The question of the horse, however, started a topic too interesting to be dropped at once.

Mrs. Spangler, who understood her daughter's position, had to urge her old man, who dozed, half of him in the house, half out,—

"Mr. Spangler, can't you make a way for Vanessy to go up to Fontaineses this evenin'?"

"Make a way for her to go where?" During this question the old gentleman cracked each knuckle of his two hands.

"Up to Fontaineses."

Mrs. Spangler was ironing energetically, and her energy always had a paralyzing effect upon her husband.

"Can't spare the horse," was the lukewarm rejoinder.

It did not occur to him, any more than to his wife, that Vanessa could walk the mile which separated them from the Fontaine's, a distance which Diana herself walked cheerfully twice a day, oftentimes; but which the ladies of Pughtown hated her for doing. It was an open violation of their chiefest canon of good breeding.

"Where's Billy Loy?"

Mrs. Spangler knew that the horse answering to this name was idle to-day on account of having cast a shoe, and that he was waiting in the stall for Mick, her eldest son, to come in from the field and ride the cob over to the shop.

"He's lame," was the reply.

"Go ahead, pappy. 'Taint goin' to hurt Billy Loy to carry me up to Fontaineses. Mick can ride him to the shop when I get back. I'll be home by candle-lighting, 'deed and 'deed I will."

"Will you?"

Spangler made a lazy movement in order to look at his daughter, perhaps to discover just how much in earnest she was about the horse. His philosophy ran this way, "Work like a dawg, if you've got to; but don't do a lick without you have to." He perceived at a glance that his daughter's mind was made up. She wore a muslin, the material best suited to the ardor of the June afternoon. It was a cheap one, gay with hollyhocks, and made by the young lady's own fingers. Even Algy Swartz might have detected that its waist was short and its plaits clumsy. A narrow pink ribbon was tied bridle-wise about her throat, her black hair was "roached up" high on the top of her head, a spick-and-spang new slat bonnet of striped calico was in one hand, the other held up the stained riding-skirt buttoned around her waist over the lawn dress. Yes, she was in visiting trim; there were no two ways about that; so Mike Spangler arose from his chair slowly. He knew that he would do this from the first; but he wanted to be as long about it as possible. He was sorry that the argument was come to a close.

He would have liked to talk five minutes longer, any way. He hobbled out towards the shed slowly; but it was another good half-hour before Miss Vanessa had the pleasure of sitting in the saddle upon Billy Loy's back. Billy Loy was deliberate, like his master, and consequently in no haste to start. Miss Spangler rode off at last, however, looking a very composite person, her lower half being habited in a riding-skirt, Amazon fashion; her upper half in muslin, ribbons, and pink and white calico, like a girl at a fair. Her hands, short and pudgy, were partly gloved in what are here called leathern half-handers. Off they went at last, and the young lady's bosom was now divided by two feelings,—exultation at having gained her point, and jealousy at the thought of the interview she was giving herself so much trouble to interrupt.

While Miss Vanessa Spangler's plans were maturing, the object of them, Captain McElroy, was enjoying his brief recess in the society of a very attractive young lady; for Diana, being at that age when women rejoice in new acquaintances, expecting to find a disguised prince in every man, was displaying her social accomplishments with the same carelessness that she would have done charms on a gold watch-chain. She scorned the heat; then complained of it; declared she could walk all day without feeling tired; the next moment flung herself on a knoll to which she climbed on the hill-side with the asseveration that she was too exhausted to move another step. In short, she exhibited herself in a variety of the most contradictory moods, determining that if one did not captivate, the next should. To herself she said, by way of apology, "I

have been getting glimpses of this man's profile for a quarter of a mile. I shall go wild, if I cannot get a good peep at his full face." With this determination, she sat down, as we have said, exhausted, on the first convenient resting-place, and took a long look at her companion, who slipped down upon the grass in front of her, his back against a tree.

She had met him several times before, though never until now in broad daylight. She had called him, mentally, an ideal troubadour; not of the dark type, for Captain McElroy was as fair as a girl, with a slimmer hand than her own. But, yes, here, in the broad daylight of a July day, he was beautiful, disappointingly, distressingly beautiful for a man. He seemed a person born to figure in an adventure, a masque, a duel, a love-affair, but not in life's serious situations. He was rash and reckless rather than grave; extravagant rather than generous; dramatic rather than sincere; a provincial Marshal Saxe, whose defects had a certain baleful beauty. He had the Turk's dogma of fatalism as well as the Mahometan sentiment concerning woman, who to him was a slave. He quoted descriptive and sentimental poetry, most deliciously the war-lyrics of the day, and he abused his own destiny. He had the gift, always rare, of bringing tears to the eyes of the listener. He appealed to Diana's æsthetic sense, until, caught by glamour, she felt him to be an extraordinary man; for, as yet, the moral perceptions had but faintly stirred within her bosom; taste, not conscience, was her guide. Sitting with his back against a drooping locust-tree, looking straight at her with his full, heavy-lidded, blue eyes,

he appeared to her as fitted for a studio, a villa, a Parisian atelier, a New York apartment, but strangely out of place in Pughtown, teaching bare-footed Stotts and tow-headed, pig-headed Funks. McElroy's soft complainings against his evil star, as he forked his long, light-brown beard with taper fingers, harmonized with the girl's own mood. He thought, in tuneful monody, that he had never been appreciated. Diana agreed with him. He hugged misfortune; called Destiny a stepmother; Heredity, a baleful demon; cast the failures of his life back upon his ancestors, upwards, to the stars; anywhere but upon himself.

Diana sighed. McElroy flung upon her in return a glance of gratitude so eloquent that it set her heart to thumping against her breast, as it cried, Be his confidante, his friend, the woman's mission. I will, I will, whispered breast, not reason, back to the heart. McElroy thought of woman as of a slave; but that she should be an intelligent one, increased the fascination.

"I wonder you stay in such a place as Pughtown, Captain McElroy. Why don't you go elsewhere, where you would find a broader field, one better suited to you?"

Diana was arranging, with infinite pains, tufts of timothy in her shade-hat, dividing her attention between McElroy's Greek nose, Byron collar, ragged regimentals, and this poetic millinery.

"Ah, Miss Fontaine, you are from the North. You can hardly realize how broken down in fortunes we poor Southern men were after the war; thousands of young girls, like you, wept bitterly on the day that

Lee surrendered; thousands of men rode away from the battle-field that had been a home to them for years; from the army, that had been father, brothers, religion, business, cause, all in one, to find their homes broken up and desolate, their families scattered: I, like others, found myself without a home, without a purpose, without means to get my daily bread. I came to Pughtown with my friend and comrade, Grat Fontaine, and here I am." A smile of sweetest melancholy fluttered the pale-brown mustaches of McElroy.

"Yes; but here you should not stay," her eyelashes twinkled up in questioning eagerness. His calmness of face did not waver.

"Miss Fontaine," he began, compressing the warmth with which he would have addressed an audience into the tepid sweetness deemed suitable for one listener, "before the war we were dreamers, here at the South; life meant being, not doing; this is no longer the land where we were dreaming,"—he paused, to impart to this quotation a rolling elocution which had gained him the reputation of the "grandest reader in the Valley,"—"this is a new land, in which we are being rudely wakened; before the waking comes the nightmare. Some of us are now having the nightmare."

There was something touching to Diana's fresh young heart in this sorrow that would not be comforted. A man with blasted fortunes, even if he refused to mend them, was, to say the least, wonderfully interesting.

"A nightmare? Horrible! But some one must wake you, Captain McElroy; let me wake you!" She felt reserves of energy seething up within her as she spoke.

She wished she could do something to encourage a ruined man.

Captain McElroy shook his head with dreary grace. After a few minutes of silence, he quoted the lines, beginning,—

> "Furl that banner, for 'tis weary,
> And its folds are drooping, dreary."

His voice died away in a broken murmur. Diana feared to look up, lest she might surprise tears on a man's cheek: she turned away her head. The July afternoon playing about them on gold butterfly-wings was so full of gladness that she could not feel as sorrowful as she felt she should have done; but McElroy, who enjoyed her sympathy too much to dispense with it yet, added,—

"To-day reminds me of July first, '63; the sun shone just as it does now over miles upon miles of yellow wheat, and it looked down upon a spectacle which, to those human eyes beholding it, can never, never be forgotten. That day began the downfall of the Confederacy. It was Gettysburg, not Appomattox, Miss Fontaine, which sealed our doom. I shall never forget those three brigades that rushed forward so gallantly, then staggered back, a bleeding remnant; three-fourths of the men, fourteen out of fifteen field-officers, lay down, forever, upon that field, under just so jubilant a sun as this." The sunbeams shone upon McElroy through the locust-branches, tingeing his long, light hair with amber warmth and touching his too pallid countenance into a moment's radiance; there was real feeling in the voice that continued: "On that day

Garnett was killed; Armistead shot, spurring his horse over the breastworks; Kemper, wounded by a canister bursting over him. Pickett's handful, charging the whole Federal army, met death at every step. They fought, bayonet to bayonet, bravely, hopelessly, and they died gloriously. Ah, Miss Fontaine, I was at Gettysburg. What is there in life after such an experience?"

"What, indeed?" Diana dared not speak, lest her own voice should shock her by its flatness. Her imagination was ready to receive impressions; she felt the spell of McElroy, a soldier, yet capable of action only under severe stress, and realizing himself that his life had been lived. She felt the splendidly Gallic quality of the Southern enthusiasm whose overflow turned into emotion, tumult, and reckless gayety those years immediately following the Confederacy. She began to think that even Pughtown could be interesting.

"What a life for the women! what a bewildering, helpless, yet glorious life!"

She chewed several grass-beards in her excitement, and mused over those possibilities for intense experience which the Confederacy had presented.

"Yes; they were one day in Northern, the next in Southern, lines; danger on every side; but they were fit to mate with our men, as far as heroism goes."

Then Captain McElroy, as if stirred by some superlatively sweet memory, began to hum that tune which no Confederate will ever forget, linked, as it is, with the sweethearting of those days of the dear old Confederacy. The humming broke into words. Diana listened and laughed as she caught them:

"A hundred months have passed, Lorina,
Since last I held thy hand in mine,
And felt its pulse beat fast, Lorina,
Though mine beat faster far than thine."

Captain McElroy's way of singing implied a whole volume of hidden histories, the consciousness of which stained his cheeks with heightened color. Fluting his lips, he changed the song to a whistled strain carrying the tune. Diana watched him eagerly.

"Those were the days for love-making. A man carried his heart on his lips; he did not know where the next day would find him: it was, speak then or never; so he spoke.

This little clause, breathed never so softly, was interrupted by the vision of a figure on horseback, a hundred paces from the secluded knoll where the two were sitting, and Vanessa Spangler rode by on Billy Loy, her alpaca skirt taking the breeze, balloon fashion.

When the horseback-vision had passed, McElroy said, regretfully, "Alas! love was sometimes too free a gift in those happy-go-lucky days, and we often said *that* which we would have wished unsaid, afterward."

A silence followed, during which McElroy was supposed to be contemplating the vision of some one of these lost loves he had been hinting at; in reality, he was observing the girl from under his drowsy eyelids. He had the morbid desire to be compassionated and esteemed a martyr. His sigh matured into a groan, and he pursued, in a voice whose modulations were very potent with Diana, "Love is the land where we were dreaming; the cause is lost, the land conquered,

the love dead." Day stood on the edge of evening. McElroy was chanting an ode to its decline, the apotheosis of defeat. He suggested ruin, but what a graceful ruin, drooping into a poetic decay, with the dignified scorn of life of the pessimist; but sorrow appeals to youth more quickly than joy; it is only when we have waked up to the purity and vigor of the spirit, and have subdued the body, that we appreciate the full meaning of joy and the serene gayety of the soul. As they followed the road-winding home, Diana put together a little romance in which the ill-fated maiden whom McElroy had loved, and to whom he had so vaguely alluded, appeared in a variety of forms. The very vagueness of the romance insinuated itself in her imagination and fascinated her. At the stile, McElroy took her hand in his loose, warm grasp and assisted her to mount it. He did not even lift his eyes, but hummed on with tender, tuneful nonchalance, as if absorbed with the memory of some sweet dream,—

> "A hundred months have passed, Lorina,
> Since last I held thy hand in mine,
> And felt its pulse beat fast, Lorina,
> Though mine beat faster far than thine."

While the two dreamers, one with quickly beating pulses, were following the roadway, Miss Mary Jane Fontaine was conducting a not very sprightly conversation with Miss Vanessa Spangler in the sitting-room, at home.

"How's your maw, Vanessy?" she asked.

The round button she called her back-twist pressed against the white crocheted tidy of the wooden rocking-chair.

"Right smart," was the answer from Miss Spangler, who sat bolt upright, as near as she could get to the wall.

"And your paw?" ran the catechism.

"Right smart; pappy's peart, these days."

"Done your drying, V'nessy?"

"Mos'," was the laconic reply, with a discontented quaver.

"It's the best sort o' dryin' weather; the sun's been good and hot." To this fact Miss Spangler opposed no comment, and Miss Fontaine, conscious of her duties as hostess, could not allow the conversation to flag. So she continued to question.

"Think you'll get to go to the Round Hill bush-meeting, V'nessy?"

"If I can make a way, Miss Mary Jane; we are going to start the pies and things nex' week. Yes, I reckon."

Miss Spangler looked up, and her eyes rested upon Roy McElroy standing in the doorway behind Diana, who, entering with easy grace, saluted the stranger, and then threw herself into a chair with charming indolence, quite unconscious of the pained heart that raged within Miss Spangler's low-drooping bosom.

"If I'd set down on a chair *that* careless, I'd a been on the floor by this time," thought Miss Spangler, looking wrathfully at the young lady, then turning her prominent garish-blue eyes full of reproach upon the handsome, equally careless-looking Roy. Jealousy almost gurgled in Miss Spangler's throat. "There she sets, and she couldn't put on more airs if she had kicked a man," ran those jealous thoughts. Diana,

gênée by the stiffness of the little group, surveyed her boots, powdered with wayside dust. The rough phrase, "kicked a man," translated into the vernacular and reading this way, "She's a proud creature, and might reject any suitor," would not have disturbed the younger Miss Fontaine, to whom hearts, as yet, were nine-pins, to be set up, merely to be knocked down again.

"I came up here to get shut of her, and shut of her I will get," said Miss Spangler, inly, rising now with prompt decision, and the words,—

"I come over, Miss Mary Jane, to invite you and Miss Fontaine to spend Sa-ad-dy at Cousin Sarah Jane Jackson's. It's her birthday, and she wants we all to eat the first mess of ros'bries with her."

An invitation, of course, can be met but in one way; so Miss Mary Jane and Diana hastened to express appreciative thanks, when a grotesquely long shadow against the open door preluded the entrance of Loughborough; his long stride and swinging gait reminded you of a jumping-jack, but the keen ray from his deep gray eyes singled out each person, whom he straightway included in a pleasant, open smile.

"Good-evening, doctor," cried Miss Mary Jane. "Come in and set down again, Vanessy; pull off your things, do; supper's nigh about ready now."

"No, thank you, Miss Mary Jane; can't stay this evening; 'deed and 'deed I can't; the horse has got to go to the shop 'fore dark." She hesitated a moment, smoothing out furrows in her half-handers, then said, softly and shyly, as if she could no longer repress herself,—

"Cap'n, you haven't any way to get back to Pughtown; don't you want to go back now. I'll ride behind. Billy Loy carries double, you know?"

Alas! love is the altruistic passion. Vanessa Spangler would rather have walked every inch of the way herself, than to have thought of McElroy's handsome legs measuring the lonely dusty road. McElroy hesitated; now that Loughborough was come, he no longer cared to tarry, and he had been already planning the most becoming and comfortable means of escape.

"If the means of travelling is all that you want, here, take my mare and ride home with her," said Loughborough, stepping out to the gate and taking his horse by the bridle-rein." She's had a good hard day's work, and will be glad of crib and trough. I am going to walk, anyway, an hour or so later, when the moon is up."

"Sure enough?" asked McElroy, still hesitating.

"Sure as you're born, Roy. Go ahead, and don't keep a lady waiting."

Miss Vanessa was already in her saddle, smiling and looking almost pretty, her slat-bonnet falling back from her face and throwing a pink and white glow upon her browned cheek. She would not have minded riding double; she would have preferred it, indeed; but she was rejoiced to gain her point, even though she must lose this tempting opportunity of sitting on Billy Loy, behind the captain, with her arms around his waist. "Good-evening, then, ladies." The captain vaulted in Loughborough's saddle, waved without hat a military salute, which made him appear handsomer than ever, and the equestrians rode off down the lane,

and were soon lost to view behind the willows. "He *is* a fine rider," cried Diana, shading her eyes to catch the last view of them. Loughborough remained silent. "He has such a sweet tenor voice, too." She thought of Lorina, and hummed a line, "A hundred years have passed, Lorina." Loughborough did not speak. "He is the most wonderful quoter of poetry!" Still Loughborough was silent. Diana thought he frowned slightly. "He is certainly a gallant soldier; you told me that, didn't you?" she added, with reproach. She longed for response.

"He *was* a gallant soldier," rejoined Loughborough; then a moment later, with a note of irony, "So you have at last found something to admire in Pughtown, Miss Fontaine?"

CHAPTER III.

THE plantation life which existed in the South before the war was the nearest approach to feudalism which modern history will ever see; but there is, perhaps, no epoch in Southern social life more deeply romantic than the first years after the war. Reconstruction was not yet achieved, and the aroma of chivalry still clung to the Southland; the negroes had not outlived the loyalty and reverence bred in vassalship. A whole people were swept by a passionate *esprit de corps* which defied misfortune. Honor was a man's wealth; poverty, his glory. His weapons were his own right arm and the horse upon which he rode home from the war. He married the girl who with

him adored the Confederacy and worshipped Lee as her patron saint. Both of them knew that love was to be their only portion; for there was no marrying for money in those days; it was the heart that was measured, not the purse.

What an odd blending of war and peace when the Confederate soldiers, after four years of warfare, turned farmers. They still wore cavalry-boots, rode on cavalry-saddles, carried their families to church in ambulances, turned their canteens to use in the dairy, called their enemies "scalawags," talked of making "the carpet-baggers skedaddle," and found time to touch their guitars on summer nights, to the chords of a war-song or love-ditty. The air had a smack in it of brilliant military memories; bushwhackers and guerillas, like the moss-troopers in Teviotdale, eight hundred years back, gave a fascinating flavor of rebellion to the sudden and oppressive peace which had settled down upon the country. It was a land without money; a people without a government, if we except that which was now become tradition. The Union was regarded as a disagreeable stepmother, and national holidays were quietly ignored. Every one agreed to laugh together over the humorous incidents which the new life presented. There was a Bohemian element in the air, and no one quite knew what he was going to do next. After discontinuing the exciting life of the battle-field, what should be the sequel? Some men returned to the occupations which had claimed them before the war; to this class belonged Launce Loughborough.

Some men, paralyzed by the huge effort they had

been making for four years, sat down to dream; to this class belonged Roy McElroy. Some men turned their swords into ploughshares and their eyes towards the political arena; to this last class belonged Grat Fontaine.

Grat was Squire Billy's youngest child, and now the only surviving one of six as likely lads as ever kicked up dust on the Pughtown pike. The war had made havoc in the Fontaine family: Ned, the eldest, Diana's father, had died of privation in the Point Lookout prison; two fell at Gettysburg; one in the tangles of the Wilderness, and one other beside Grattan, Kosciusko, survived the war, and married, just before its close, Law-ra, a sister of Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk.

Law-ra's wedding was an odd blending of pleasure and plunder, occurring, as it did, when Lee's commissariat was nearly exhausted. This young woman's wedding-handkerchiefs and underclothing were contrived out of the coarse sheeting which old Mrs. Fahnestalk (Fawnystawk) had woven with her own hands and left behind her in the wardrobes of the homestead. The daughters had, in various times of emergency, despoiled themselves, bit by bit, of their under-garments, for conversion into bandages in hospital-service. They were excellent, useful young women, never stopping to consider, when a wounded soldier was at hand, how much they might miss their under skirts, aprons, or gowns, so long as these things could be turned into compresses for gaping wounds. Law-ra's bridal present was the contents of an entire shop which Moseby and his men had raided the night previous to the wedding. The booty was placed at the

bride's disposal by the groom-elect, a daring guerilla; and the two were married on horseback, as they were in the enemy's lines, and had to be ready to flee if a signal should be given. The bride, at any other time, might have been embarrassed by boxes of stockings, bolts of edging, yards upon yards of alpaca braid, packages of pink and blue mosquito-netting, jars of striped mint candy; but, now, these treasures were a godsend, and were shared with friends and neighbors, according to the generous fashion of the times. After the war, Law-ra and Kosciusko went West, where they died, within a few weeks of each other, from the effects of mountain fever. So out of a large family only two were left,—Miss Mary Jane and Grattan, the oldest and the youngest.

Billy had almost Oriental ideas concerning women. His daughters received but scant education, being looked upon as the menial portion of the household; but the boys had been allowed freedom, and several of them college training,—Diana's father being one of these. The old gentleman had been proud of his sons, a handsome lot of fellows,—a flesh-and-blood library, he said, showing his own intellectual tastes.

"I put every uncommon man, such as I set store on, into my family group,—English, American, Polish; it's all the same. I like to see them scattered around my hearth-place."

Edward Everett, William De Kalb, James Buchanan, George Washington, Kosciusko, and Henry Grattan, therefore, grew up under their father's wing into strong-limbed fellows, with a taste for politics and a huge scorn of what was called, later, the Bourbon.

At the same time, they were not without a sly contempt of what Billy called, with a grin, the Conestoga,—that is, the common country people.

He looked upon his girls as ciphers, useful in combination with other figures, but of no consequence by themselves. They were not deemed worthy even of illustrious names, such as their brothers had fallen heir to. Susan married, and died, as the tombstone overlooking Pughtown village records; 'Lizy Alice had also been snatched from life's tedium, leaving Miss Mary Jane to grind alone at the family's mill.

This lady's failure to marry had been a mortification to Squire Fontaine, whose opinion was that when a woman has no vocation for matrimony, she is no longer a woman, but a slave. In his eyes, women must either be slaves or queens, and certain it is that Mary Jane was no queen. There had been a time—the tide of life standing at its highest in her veins—when she had rebelled; but only once, for she had been very quickly put down, and her back soon became fitted to her burden. She loved Grattan secretly; but he frankly admitted that she bored him, that her tameness roused the devil in him; so she endured his dislike meekly, mended his socks, prepared the dishes he liked, watched his comings and goings with furtive solicitude, and left him undisturbed.

This treatment of her Aunt Mary angered Diana; but what angered her still more was that she saw herself placed in the same category. A week at the Valley Farm, and not one word of welcome addressed to her yet by Grattan.

"I will make that boorish man speak to me this

morning at breakfast," she said to herself, on the morning of the raspberry feast, as she dressed in her aunt's queer bedroom.

It was five o'clock. Miss Mary Jane breakfasted the whole year round at five, dined at eleven, and supped in the afternoon at five. She had always been flying ahead of time, though why, no man knew; for she had gained nothing from this mad race with the hours, not even a husband. There was a foretaste of heat in the dainty breeze that rattled the brilliantly blue-paper shades of the windows. Diana hated these shades because the blue rubbed off, and because, being opaque, she could not lie in bed and see the sky through them; besides which, they were tied with pink tape, and this made discord to her eye.

"Yes, I will compel that boorish man to speak to me. He shall not treat me as he does Aunt Mary. I am a Fontaine as well as he."

Diana sprang from her couch and bounded across the bare, blue-painted floor, in the determination to shake off the sluggishness bred of feathers, upon which she had been lying all night. The Fontaines had all been "raised to feather-beds." There was a flaw in the laying of the planks of the floor; they sank slightly—an inclined plane—as you approached the bureau. In crossing the room, you could not walk straight. It seemed as if the floor waved and the walls heaved; it would have made you sea-sick, that is, if you had happened to be as sensitive as was Diana. It was this sensibility which enraged her uncle, as a bit of red rag would enrage a bull. It was the elaborate carelessness, the exaggerated simplicity savoring of the Bourbon,

which went against the grain in Grattan; for he found her a blending of nature and art; and a part of his creed was to abominate high-faluting notions.

"Damn the Bourbons!" was just now his war cry.

After diamonding her neck with delicious drops of spring-water, and emerging from the elixir throbbing with life and radiantly fresh as her namesake, the goddess of the bath, Diana finished her task of dressing quickly, and descended to the breakfast-room, intent upon conversation that should include her uncle. To her good-morning smile, he gave an oblique glance of disapprobation out of a pair of chestnut-brown eyes, and pursued his meal, studiously taciturn.

"What a delicious day for our ride!" she ventured, casting a sidewise glance at her uncle, and wondering if he could be tempted into a courteous salutation.

"Delicious! The 'mirations over nature of these town-bred girls," thought Grat, with his mouth full of corn-bread, his dogged and democratic nostrils teased by the scent of the sweetbrier rose in the brown braids. He would not have minded its delicate perfume from the trellis, its home, but the pretty note of a woman's vanity offended him on principle. He had a vague consciousness that most young women take the autobiographic view of life; that they look at nature subjectively, not objectively, as they should; that they cannot see a height without fancying how they would look upon it, or a stream of water, without reproducing their sensations in it. He considered, therefore, their rhapsodies upon nature as sincere, only so far as it included themselves; and sincerity was the quality

which turned Grat to a fanatic. Politically, he might be an individualist, but not artistically.

"How soon shall we start, Aunt Mary?"

A visit in this country meant going early and returning late, so as to include holiday from preparing meals at home.

"As soon as your Uncle Grat can get the horses up, honey. They're in the field, ain't they?"

This interrogative, addressed to her brother, drew no response from Grat Fontaine. There he sat, close to his elegant niece, in his shirt-sleeves, his ducking-pants stuffed into top-boots, as if he were making a meal with clod-hoppers.

His elegant niece eyed him resentfully. Why would he be so rude? yet he was good-looking, too, in spite of it all. He was the kind of man whom fast eating, heavy drinking, and sluggish digestion will one day turn coarse; but, as yet, he showed that fine muscularity which four years of privation in the way of eating and cavalry service had developed in him. He was the ideal Mars, drawing his breath passionately through his well-cut nostrils; his dark russet beard and bronzed cheek showing the red lights of a wrathful temperament; his robust muscles abandoned, at this moment, to the absorbing task of eating. Just so might Mars have breakfasted after one of the conflicts of the Trojan siege. His movements betokened violence; he despised what he called airs, affectations, and fine-ladyisms; and of these small vices he considered his niece, Diana, the living representative. He likewise disdained the feminine virtues of meekness, patience, and endurance, and so he despised his sister Mary Jane, whom he con-

sidered the embodiment of these qualities. Naturally impatient, he could sympathize with those who rebelled, not with those who submitted. Fiercely democratic, he stood by the class who demand their rights; and he looked askance at the class which considers itself the exponent of culture,—culture being a word which gave him cold shivers, another name for affectation and hypocrisy, and a synonyme for oppression.

Born of good blood, he had received the education of a peasant; and, like all men to whom Fortune has shown herself unequal, he felt insecure. He was suspicious of his betters and very fractious towards his inferiors. He was not a man to be slighted by other men, nor to be contemned by women. He had something of the old squire's contempt for the latter; and, though he knew right well that he could have had the pick of the county for a wife, he did not choose marriage. He might have loved a mistress, but not a wife; matrimony, which tames some men, would have converted this one into a despot. He felt seething within his bosom that wild spirit of revolt which agitated Burns; that harsh pride which embittered Carlyle. He was a man to be caught in the toils of his own passions; for strong passions need to be cooled by the fresh atmosphere of the intellect, and he had experienced no such cooling. This was what Pughtown had done in the way of education for Billy Fontaine's youngest child.

"I do not wish to go in the little spring-wagon with Aunt Mary and Miss Spangler. I want to go on horseback," announced Diana, turning boldly upon her uncle.

His answer was to thrust his two-tined fork across the table in order to attract Miss Mary Jane's attention to the fact that he wanted another slice of fried middling. Miss Fontaine lifted the dish containing this savory fry and tilted it towards him, speaking no word. Grat harpooned a slice with the point of his fork, flinging, the while, a half-mocking, half-choleric glare upon Diana. He found a secret satisfaction in this display of boorishness; the fine curves he had set in motion in the girl's features attracted him; and he deepened them by asking with a snort, between mouthfuls of coffee,—

"I suppose you don't think Miss Spangler good enough to go with. Is that what you're up to?"

"Not by half; nor those slow-going plough-horses, either."

Diana was frank in her admission. "My ambition is to ride Patsy, that nice little riding-horse you have just bought."

Fontaine laughed; he was partially appeased by this praise of Patsy, his latest investment. He knew himself to be a connoisseur in horse-flesh. He forgot to be irritated by her scorn of the farm-cobs; still he thought women had no right to be fastidious, and that they should be grateful for the smallest favors bestowed upon them by their lords and masters.

"Come, Uncle Grattan, I can be as hard to please as you. Come, saddle Patsy for me, that's a nice fellow; won't you?"

The mingling of entreaty with command was decidedly attractive to Fontaine, who had usually been approached by his women-folks in the strain of abject

entreaty. It requires imperiousness to tame imperiousness. Miss Mary Jane had never spoken to him thus boldly in her life. When he was a little fellow of four years, she had once besought him, with tears in her eyes, not to say, "Damn my father!" and she had never dared to make a remonstrance but that once.

"Promise. Mind, Uncle Grattan, Patsy. I've made up my mind to have nothing short of Patsy. I will not go in the spring-wagon. No, you shall not be able to tie me there," ordered Diana, playing a queen's rôle prettily.

Uncles are like other men, and can be bewitched by a saucy mouth, no matter to whom it belongs; and Fontaine, as we have seen, sympathized with the class who demand rights and claim privileges. He looked at her leaning her arm upon the breakfast-table. This arm—round, firm, of warm creamy tint—was one of her beauties. It obeyed her impulses, and suggested deep reserves of energy pent up within, to culminate in art, labor, maternity, or what? for into any of those channels the spirit might guide its fountain of zeal.

Fontaine took a good long look at his niece, pleased with her person; but that odious brier-rose smelled too much of the cultured class, of which she no doubt considered herself an ornament. It tickled his sensitive nostrils and brought a wave of rebellion over him. Bah! she was too much of a fine lady, after all; the glitter of her lace-pin conveyed a challenge. He pushed back his chair, jumped up abruptly, and, settling his mustache with his right hand, walked noisily out of the room. At the barn, the aristocratic embellishments were effaced in his memory by youth-

ful bloom and spirit. What man is not proud of a handsome kinswoman? Grat worshipped strength,—and such a woman as this might tame him. He strolled up to the stile, when they were all ready to start, and stood for a moment watching Miss Mary Jane and Miss Vanessa Spangler climb up into the spring-wagon.

All of a sudden, Diana, who was holding back, gave a little cry of delight, for she had caught sight of Black Wesley, coming down from the barn with stately step, leading Patsy by the bridle-rein.

"Well, isn't that Patsy for you?" asked Grat, in a voice without a trace of gruffness in it.

Her petition having been granted, Diana was not only full of gratitude, but generous in the expression of it. She threw out her arms impulsively,—the kind of arms a man would desire to be embraced by, and capable of saying, better than the lips, "I love you; you are mine."

Grattan smiled; he was having his reward.

"You know it isn't every girl I'd let ride this mare," said Grattan, running his hand along the girth and feeling the check-strap of the stirrup to see if they were secure. "But you look as if you could manage her. She'll try your arms, too, before you are through."

"Oh, I have so much more strength than I know what to do with. I long to feel my power!"

She submitted to having a hideous black alpaca riding-skirt, belonging to Miss Mary Jane, fastened around her beribboned waist.

"Do you know I gave up going to town to-day, so as to let you have Patsy; and I shall lose a chance

of meeting a man who owes me money, by not going; but ——" He stood stolid and mute under a shower of regretful thanks, hurried Diana into the saddle, and then, after a laconic, "Keep a firm grip on the rein; she's a hard mouth," he inflicted a pinch upon her arm, which left an orange and violet mark for days after.

Diana did not flinch, however, under this sudden surprise of pain, for she comprehended that this surrender of Patsy was the beginning of a compact of friendship betwixt them, and that the pinch was its seal. With a radiant smile of farewell, she gave a gentle jerk to the rein and started in pursuit of the spring-wagon, lumbering ahead in the muddy lane. This lane was always muddy, even in times of drought, on account of a spring which bubbled up into a trough, then spilt itself into a score of pretty rivulets criss-crossing, first, the lane, then the high-road, and, lastly, the adjacent field.

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Sarah Jane Jackson was a woman with her uses. She was a famous assistant in the Pughtown neighborhood at funerals, weddings, and births. She had helped to lay out Billy Fontaine, and acknowledged him to be "the beautifullest corpse ever she set eyes on." She secretly worshipped Grat, who to her was Balder the Beautiful and Apollo the Bright, all in one. But realizing the hopelessness of this passion, she

found consolation in loading his sister with attentions, and sending to him, through this lukewarm messenger, the newest hiving of honey, the prize melon of her patch, or a bottle of home-made wine,—currant-wine, with several winters' age upon it, was to this good creature the next thing to sherry. The Valley Farm was her earthly paradise, and she usually "had a call to go" there in the time of apple-butter boiling, bush-meeting, and harvesting. Happy was Miss Sarah Jane when she could banquet those bead-bright eyes of hers upon handsome Grat. Sometimes she would pester him with inquiries after his health; and when, at last, she drove him beyond her range, to the out-skirts of the farm, she would sit down quietly in the chimney-corner, take out her wild cherry-stick and dip snuff, surrendering herself the while to love-dreams. A small modicum of sentimentality, however, sufficed; for she was an eager, active, nervous creature, welcome everywhere, because she was a useful one, also.

She stood on her bird-nest porch as the cavalcade wound up to the stile, and greeted her guests with effusive, almost girlish, eagerness. The sun of mid-morning in July poured down its vertical rays upon the stocks and gillies in Miss Sarah Jane's garden and well-nigh converted Diana to slat bonnets, her cheeks being so burned, whereas Vanessa Spangler's were of their usual dull brownish red, untouched with fresh tan.

Miss Sarah Jane lost no time in conducting the three guests to the little parlor, which to Diana seemed a heaven of coolness, shut away from the garish sunlight by green blinds. They all sat down stiffly in chairs at

right angles with the wall, and Miss Sarah Jane pulled off her brown calico slat-bonnet. In the patch of tender light stealing in through the open door, she looked forty-six, though, in reality, she was not more than thirty-six. Women age more quickly in the country than in town. Had she been city-bred, she would have known how to soften these abrupt features and harsh face-lines by a thousand arts ; as it was, she could not have displayed them more. What might have been, under flattering accessories, vivacity, was now aggressive sharpness. She wore unbecoming colors and combed her hair straight back from a thin face, whose features were strongly marked, like those of a man. Her voice, too, touched upon the manly register, and perpetually gave the lie to her feminine giggle, her hysterical squeals, and nervous jumps. Poor creature ! with all her smartness and all her energy, she had never grown up, but was a mingling of maturity and rawness.

"Let's go up," said Miss Sarah Jane, in a few minutes, skittish, as if a flea were biting her. Her Mozambique dress intensified the wiriness of her tall, angular figure, and the bright pink stripes set yellow tones loose in her complexion ; an embroidered collar, fastened with a hair breast-pin and worn low, showed several inches too much of a stringy throat, which the innocent lady, a trifle too gay in her tastes, had decorated with a green ribbon-bridle ; her hands were protected by sheepskin half-handers, the palms ensanguined by the crimson blood of the raspberries she had been crushing for dinner.

"You must lay off your things, now. Come up,

Miss Mary Jane; come, Miss Dianny; come up, Venessy."

She apostrophized each guest with strict impartiality, and then led the way up a steep flight of steps to a large double-bedded chamber on the floor above. "How delicious!" Diana, letting loose her favorite adjective, drew off her gloves, pushed back her hat, and sank into an easy-chair. Miss Mary Jane, more formal than her niece, forebore to remove sun-bonnet or gloves until specially invited to do so by the mistress of the house; this being Pughtown etiquette. Miss Spangler's pride was of a morbidly sensitive type, and she thought the city-bred nonchalance of Diana Fontaine a disagreeable form of patronage. Perhaps she realized vaguely that the younger Miss Fontaine looked upon the world from a too narrowly æsthetic stand-point, regarding every one in it as a background to herself.

"Why, Miss Sarah Jane, your bed is as big as a house."

Diana sprang up from her chair, letting fall the hideous alpaca riding-skirt, ran her hand up and down the quilt, and, thinking of the castle of Indolence, she said, "A nap in this bed would be the luxury of luxuries; wouldn't it, Aunt Mary?"

Miss Mary Jane looked offended; for this speech, innocent though it was, seemed to her a criticism upon the beds at the Valley Farm. "One would think the girl had never seen a bed before; and she from the city, too," was Miss Spangler's satirical comment, delivered inly.

"You are welcome to take a nap in it, honey, when-

ever you feel like it, that you are," was the response, for speeches often please a hostess which offend a fellow-guest.

"I made this quilt; first one I ever made; and I think it's my prettiest, too. Don't you like it better than the one in the room as used to be Paw's, Miss Mary Jane?"

"Yes, I reckon so, Sary; it's a richer pattern, like."

It *was* a rich pattern. Upon a white ground were scattered baskets of gorgeous red and yellow tulips; vines supporting birds of an infinite variety of hues, and composed of bits of variegated calico, all in stuffed work, the whole quilted in an intricate design.

Pleased with Diana's appreciation of her handiwork, Miss Sarah Jane proposed to unlock several other quilts. While she was thus engaged, the young lady flitted about the room on a tour of discovery, peeping into the vase of skeleton leaves on the mantle, inspecting the blue celluloid comb and brush which lay clasped in a kind of religious expectation upon the bureau, or touching with prying fingers the pin-cushion upon which the word "Welcome" was outlined in pins. The chairs, dressed up in chintz covers ruffled at the bottom, looked comfortably human, as if they might be younger sisters of Miss Sarah Jane, who fingered one of them as she talked, pulling the ruffles down over the legs, as if they were pantalettes.

"Do show me all the charming queer things you have in your house; won't you, Miss Sarah Jane?" said Diana, when she had seen all the quilts; and Miss Sarah Jane did. Rude though her taste was, this lady had a concept of beauty. Not so Miss Spangler. If

we except her admiration of McElroy's handsome face, she was utilitarian to the core, never having thought in her life, unless vaguely, when the animal within her, stirred to sensations of hunger, cold, or sublimed to a barbaric jealousy, the strongest emotion she was capable of. Perhaps Diana Fontaine had never really thought, either; though she would have been the last to admit such a fact. She had done a good deal of feeling of the subtler sort, and she considered herself, no doubt, a personage of deep sentiments.

They descended to the parlor, a *chef-d'œuvre* of ingenuity. On the walls were prints enclosed in frames made of nutshells glued together, which would have driven a squirrel mad. The lintels of the door and the window-casings were bright blue; the curtains were modelled upon a pair which Miss Sarah Jane had seen at the Fawnystawk's when she had helped to lay out the old lady.

"And the whitewashing I done by myself. The ladder slipped and laid me up nigh about two months with a sprained ankle. That was the winter I eat for my Christmas dinner two slices o' dried-apple pie, settin' alone by the kitchen fire. My lot's a lonely one, Miss Dianny."

Miss Sarah Jane never failed to talk on a steady streak when she had the chance; so much of her life was passed in solitude, that these chances were rare indeed.

"Oh, and here's the place where my geraniums stay in the winter-time. I set up a whole night, once, to keep my Lady Washington from freezing. I put my shawl over her, and kept the fire up, and watched and watched until daybreak."

"Did she freeze?" asked Diana, in quick sympathy.

"Not that night. That was the worst night of the season. I set there and talked it out to her. She were one great mass of white flowers, and there was not so much as one tetched. Then there come another freeze in March; not so bad; but I weren't expecting of it, and that night she went. I felt as if something were going wrong, somehow; slept uncomfortable, and when I went to look, first thing in the morning, she were black as a cinder. I set down an' cried; I couldn't help it, for the life of me. It seemed like it wuz a sure enough persin, and I loved it."

Miss Sarah Jane shut her eyes to see in imagination the beautiful Lady Washington that had met such an untimely end; Miss Mary Jane and Miss Spangler, superior to such weaknesses, looked straight ahead in scornful silence. Presently Miss Sarah Jane opened her eyes, and, catching sight at once of a thread upon one of her rugs, stooped down and flicked it away with the utmost care.

"You give me these pieces; do you remember, Miss Mary Jane?" she said, smoothing affectionately the gay stripes of a couple of rugs made of worsted rags knitted together. "You give me these pieces when I was up to the Farm two years ago come next fifteenth day of September. It were when your Maw wuz laid out. Do you remember, we went over all the chists together?"

Miss Mary Jane remembered with a sigh.

The parlor was crammed with things: vases upon the mantelpiece contained tall bouquets of varnished autumn leaves, very brittle and darkly brilliant; there

were two robins' nests and a painted China dog, a "keepsake," Miss Sarah Jane said. In one corner stood the knick-knack table, with its cover of stamped oil-cloth, the point hanging down in front with strict accuracy; on it were displayed, in rigid elaborateness, a row of daguerrotypes open; a huge conch shell, a gilded cup and saucer, and a scarlet Book of Beauty, also "a keepsake," explained Miss Sarah Jane, using this as a sort of company word, and taking up the volume tenderly, so as to dust with her sleeve its red and gold title.

"I set a heap of store on this, Miss Mary Jane," she said. "It is a keepsake give me by Paw's youngest brother, who went out West to live when I were a little thing in my paddies."

After some talk about the spring-house, the calf that had been weaned, and the cow that had gone dry, Miss Sarah Jane went off to the kitchen, leaving her guests to entertain each other. Then followed a dreary interval. They all sat down in black horse-hair chairs, Miss Spangler with an album containing photographs of Confederate generals; Diana beside the window, which let in a honeyed scent from the sweet peas, phlox, and marigolds in the garden; the flowers were pouring out their souls to the warm wind, and a tall rose-bush a-bloom under the shutters sent out its penetrating sweetness over all the others, like a high, pure soprano voice. Diana surrendered herself to a translation of odor into sound, disturbed now and then by a deep sigh from her aunt. Miss Mary Jane Fontaine had passed so many years of her life in self-repression that a talent for dumbness had developed to a wonderful

degree. She could sit for hours "hatching one foot," Grat said, without opening her lips. She never wondered at anything; never regarded anything as strange; but considered life a series of monotonous pursuits arranged by our heavenly Father in order to prepare us for death. She looked upon this fair world which God has made as a kind of poorly kept public-house, wherein we stay such a short time that it does not make much difference what we do or do not have; and upon the Creator as a grudging landlord, who filled up a long bill of benefits conferred, and demanded a large pay in return. A drought, a freshet, a death, a failure in the crops, it was all the same, and all for the best. The intensity of this lady's resignation had dried up the fountains of her sympathy and paralyzed the currents of her soul. It was the philosophy of hopelessness, a pessimism; not even picturesque: it was drear and dreary; and it was not to be wondered at that Grat turned away from his sister, revolted by her religion of negation.

A peculiarly long-drawn sigh on the part of Miss Mary Jane was changing to a snore, when dinner was announced,—dinner, the *pièce de résistance* in the domestic drama of country life. Cooking is the art in which the Hessian excels. Such fried chicken! such cream gravy! such hot rolls! beside the famous French *entrées;* they are what the real gentleman is beside a dancing-master. No unknown lurking flavors, no minced-up tid-bits; but excellent, hearty, frankly revealed flavors; the chicken tastes of chicken, and not of something else. If you have once eaten a dinner in Pughtown, you have your standard set for all time.

It is a meal for a transcendentalist. It has absorbed the energy of several women, and is the fulfilment of an ideal which generations have labored to reach. The receipts have been handed down, after long success, as tradition, rather might we say history.

Miss Sarah Jane, fly-brush in hand, sat at the head of the table, watching her guests, but not eating herself, which occupation would have been too coarse for the artist who has mixed the sauces, rolled out the pastry, yellowed the pickle, to make it look bronzy; blended essences of almond, vanilla, lemon, and pine-apple; constructed four-storied cakes, with entresols of cocoanut and caramel; carved the sweetmeats into copies of fishes, leaves, birds. There was no wonder that Miss Spangler fell to musing over the happy destiny of being McElroy's bride, with Cousin Sarah Jane to make the wedding-cake. There was no wonder that Diana ate recklessly, and that Miss Mary Jane, yielding to a glass of currant wine, felt imparted to her on the instant a more cheerful view of life.

Miss Sarah Jane was hypercritical in her judgment even of those dishes wherein she excelled, and she often said, "It don't pay to eat after this one and that one; it isn't every one as knows how to keep a churn clean, the particularest part of the job of butter-making; there aren't much you can tell me about that; ef I'd as many dollars as I've made pounds of butter since I've been alive, I'd be good and well off now. I'll eat butter up to the Valley Farm and up to Fawny-stawk's, but I'd be pisoned before I'd take a taste in town; the town folks don't know what they're eatin' one-half the time." Then, with a "Make out your

dinner, V'nessy; make out yours, Dianny," and, with her strict impartiality as a hostess, "make out a meal, Miss Mary Jane," she rose from the table, seeing that her guests were replete, she not having touched a morsel.

The earlier part of the afternoon was spent in the state of quiescence favorable to digestion. The elder ladies repaired to the outer shed to inspect the new bantam's eggs, curiosities for size, and to see how quickly the tomatoes were reddening in their rows along the window-sills. The younger ladies went to the guest-chamber, and Vanessa, laying her face, in tint like a cheap chromo, upon the pillow of the bed with the gorgeous quilt, fell fast asleep. Diana found the feathers too heating for a nap, so she pushed the shutters open to make a brighter light, and leaned out of the window. What drowsy silence prevailed; a fly buzzed on the pane, a rooster crowed in the yard, with dreamy, prolonged crow; now that he had the world to himself, he seemed determined to make the most of his music and demand the flattering attention bestowed upon the singing-birds. He attempted a series of badly-executed trills, which turned out to be too great an effort for his throat, proof that roosters are not expected in this world of limitations to play the rôle of canary.

The heat was intolerable. Diana wondered why the little round summer-apples swinging on the trees did not bake as they hung.

"It is an afternoon for a bath. The brook! I hear it singing behind the spring-house. Oh, the coolness of it! Miss Vanessa, Miss Vanessa, wake up," she cried close to that young lady's drowsy ear.

Miss Spangler unclosed her large, prominent, porcelain-blue eyes without a ray of intelligence in them.

"Don't go to sleep again; it will give you a headache, sure. Besides, I have the most delightful plan." A ray of consciousness glimmered in Miss Spangler's eyes. Diana went on. "A bath in the brook. Come, let's go and find Miss Sarah Jane." In youth, spirits are contagious. Miss Spangler shook off sleep, but its fumes still clung to her as she went down-stairs, sluggishly, to look for Diana, whom she found in the parlor talking with an enthusiasm which went straight to Miss Sarah Jane's heart.

"Bathe in the brook, honey? That you shall, and in Back Crick, too, if you've a mind to. I'll go with you; we'll all go."

It seemed a pity that middle age should have set its seal upon Miss Sarah Jane's body, while it left her spirit as yet untouched. She turned to include Miss Mary Jane Fontaine in the party; but that lady shook her head. With her, bathing was a strictly utilitarian occupation, to be indulged in, not for pleasure, but for the purpose of removing extraneous matter from the skin. In her mind, there was no sharp line to separate the pleasant from the carnal, and the two would intermingle.

"The Run," she said, as she took her seat in the half-lighted parlor, on a black-painted chair with rockers so small that they reminded you of a young bullock whose horns are beginning to sprout; "the Run. Why, you'll get more dirt on you nor you'll be able to wash off in good spring-water this many a day."

"The dirt! Why, that's part of the fun," said Miss

Sarah Jane, who, in spite of her boldness, stood a little in awe of her friend's low-spirited philosophy.

Miss Mary Jane, in the luxury of dreariness, gave a sigh that was half-aspirate, half-tonic, and unfolded the "Methodist Episcopal" which lay upon her knee.

"You two girls put off down yon path past the spring-house to them willows, and I'll ketch up with you in no time with the bath-dresses."

Miss Sarah Jane gave forth an excited but suppressed laugh which sounded very much like a snicker. Her mirth was genuine, but it was not beautiful; it would never have inspired a writer of odes like Diana's. This young person followed the path pointed out, in a whirlwind of high spirits, past the spring-house, through a dimpling piece of field arcaded by forest oaks; then she hastened her steps and reached the Run quite out of breath. What a lovely stream! It measured the little valley, shut in betwixt two ridges, with its liquid length. Now its waters were of a mellow, russet-tone, recessed at this point by water-willows and pollard-willows, interspersed with oak and maple, so that they reflected the rich brown soil of either bank, which the sun, drooping a little now, but still brilliant, kindled into that noble and living color which we see in finest bronze-work; in the oak-leaf when it turns in October; in the monumental tree-bole when it has taken upon itself the rich yet sombre mosaic work of moss and lichen.

Diana's bathing-dress turned out to be a white dimity wrapper which Miss Sarah Jane had reserved through the years of chance and change, thinking that she might one day use it as a shroud. As it must be

used on an extraordinary occasion, why not this as well as any other? Gay young girls, alive in every pore, who thank God because man had been allowed by Him to create nymphs and fauns and dryads and satyrs, were guests so rare at Miss Sarah Jane Jackson's that the occasion of their coming might well be called extraordinary. Would this untrammelled, color-loving, Hellenic virgin ever convert her worship of nymphs into that of saints? This is not a question to be answered on the spot, in the presence of the young lady herself, who stood under a tree, poking with one naked foot the root ramifications that lay coiled like a snake on the slope of the bank, plaiting a tress of long, thick brown hair, and humming, with a kind of wanton sweetness,—

> "A hundred months have passed, Lorina,
> Since last I held thy hand in mine."

The sleeves of Miss Sarah Jane's shroud, thus hastily converted into a bathing-dress, being wide, disclosed the rounded elbow and pliant wrist as Diana half bowed her arm for the purpose of hair-plaiting.

That were a grand piece of dimity, to be sure; it could outlast more than one lifetime, thought Miss Sarah Jane, admiring the double ruffles, which were certainly becoming to the young girl, and the pearl buttons, which the latter fastened with as much nonchalance as if pearl buttons grew in the thickets as plentifully as blackberry blossoms. Miss Sarah Jane and Vanessa had to be satisfied with spotted brown calico frocks to bathe in; shrouds not being found in profusion in any woman's wardrobe, no matter how

beforehanded and prudent she may be. When arrayed for the bath, Miss Spangler paused, beginning to feel compunctions about entering the brown water, which to Diana seemed to be of so rich and soft a hue. Miss Spangler wondered if there were frogs or lizards in the pool, or snakes, and with this climax she gave vent to a high feminine squeal that set your very teeth on edge.

"Nonsense!" cried Diana, sending out a gleeful laugh. "You must go in with a dash, and then you will frighten them away." So saying, she bent forward, pausing an instant to smile back to her own face reflected in the water, then lifting her arms high and bringing her hands together so that palm touched palm after the fashion of divers, she gave a downward spring, and, touching the calm, serious surface of the stream, sent its waters into flashing jets about her, so that she was stolen from view for a few minutes; then seen, ahead, breasting the current, her dimity gown, translucent over gleaming flesh, took the gliding movement of a swan.

Miss Sarah Jane led a series of ha-ha's from the bank, after which, catching Vanessa by the gown, she splashed into the Run, where they both floundered about like a couple of ignoble ducks striving in vain to imitate the motions of the stately swan.

Never had this retired spot been so jubilant; it was a mad midsummer revel. Miss Spangler got her mouth full of mud, and, receiving shocks of water plump in her face from the hands of the frolicking Sarah Jane, declared in shouts, broken by peals of laughter, that she was strangling, and that Miss Fon-

taine must come to her rescue. Diana, swimming onwards in superb unconcern, turned her throat so as to bend backwards her head and survey the two women who stood struggling and ha-ha-ing in the stream, with no higher conception of mirth than noise. Just so might Amphitrite, queen of the sea, have regarded a couple of inferior nymphs.

"Help ! help !" shrieked Vanessa Spangler, in mimic terror, essaying to get out of reach of the shower-baths with which Miss Sarah was persistently douching her.

"Come here. Do you see that smooth stone on the brink? You will find it a perfect seat, with the willow all around you, and the water halfway up. Come, Miss Vanessa, give me your hand." Diana stood upright, as she strove to encourage the shrinking Miss Spangler to take a few steps forward.

"Ugh ! it is so slimy. Suppose—suppose——" Miss Spangler gave a half-smothered little scream; she thought that she had put her foot on the snake, which, to her, was ubiquitous.

"Suppose—don't suppose anything, or you'll never make headway. That wasn't a snake you touched, but a smooth, flat pebble. Good: you are getting on well now; a few steps more; here, give me your hand."

Thus encouraged, Miss Spangler, reeling like a drunken man, fearing at each instant that she would go down into some dreadful hole, staggered forward, her arms tremblingly outstretched toward Diana. Miss Sarah Jane continued to splash water upon her from behind, urging her on at the same time with good-humored hostility.

As Diana leaned forward to take Miss Spangler's

hand, the water, waist-high, leaving unconcealed the upper half of her figure, a violent rattling of the tree-boughs on the opposite bank startled the three bathers. Diana glanced around anxiously, but was forced the next instant to concentrate her energies upon Miss Spangler, who threatened to collapse on the spot.

"I believe it's a man," cried Miss Sarah Jane, to whom the dragon—man—was as ubiquitous as the serpent was to Miss Spangler. She stood straight up in her frock, catching the air like a balloon in the back, and showing darts in the front of the bodice that seemed to be painted upon that lady's wet bosom. She crossed the Run at a couple of strides in order to take further observations.

The word man wellnigh gave Miss Spangler another convulsion, for, with all her adipose matter, she was but a timid creature. Diana had to say, reassuringly, "A man? Nonsense. It is the wind in the willows or some crows lighting on the maples yonder. I believe I will go and investigate for myself."

She turned, as she spoke, to cross the stream. Her dimity gown, having entirely lost the hard lines of a shroud, melted to the mould of her figure like an outer layer of skin to which the inner made a rose-flushed lining. So close did the dimity cling to the round of her bust, that she seemed like a delicately nude statue from which offending realism of detail has been swept by the sculptor's poetic hand. One arm was lifted, for she was squeezing the water from her hair, and Ned Fontaine, her father, would have exclaimed, had he been present, "the Diana of the bath come to life;" but it was not Ned Fontaine's ghost who flung aside the

intervening willow boughs on the left-hand side of the Run to look at the bathers. Who was the interloper? It needed but a second glance to recognize McElroy's handsome blond face and full, sleepy blue eyes resting with indolent admiration upon the rondure of Diana's bust and the gleaming nakedness of her beautiful arms. His eyes had a brief moment granted them for admiration, for the young girl, quick as thought, slipped down into the sheltering water, which stole all of her from view except the face, whose dainty chin just grazed the surface of the stream, as she made paddling movements with her arms, one of her long plaits floating about her like a mesh of brown seaweed.

As soon as Miss Spangler's eyes had communicated to her brain the fact that McElroy was standing behind the willows looking at them, she gave a series of little yells, quite piteous to hear, and gathering her flowered calico about her, though its saturated folds clogged each step, she made a bound, impossible except under strong excitement, plunged into the thicket and hid behind a tree, with all the bashfulness and shame of having been discovered in some guilty act; for, with all her obtuseness, she had an overmastering fear of violating the proprieties.

"Excuse me, ladies," began McElroy, lazily, in no haste for the scene to change. "I would not have intruded, for the world, on such a nice, cool, private, little place as this; but we were passing in the buggy, Loughborough and I, and heard cries of help, help. Somebody was being drowned in the run, we thought. The grade is very near, you see, though you'd hardly think it, the bushes are so thick."

Yes, the road was humiliatingly near; Diana perceived this fact now for the first time. And yet who would have thought of any one passing; she had considered herself quite out of the world.

"I had a lift in the morning as far as Appleby's store, where Loughborough picked me up, and I persuaded him to bring me home by Miss Sarah Jane's." He turned to look for Miss Sarah Jane that he might make his bow; but that lady had departed, having nearly flapped herself out of her wet dress, and her skin, too, in her haste to get home and make additions to the bill of fare for tea; for she was one of the women who think that there is nothing in this world quite good enough for the men to eat.

How Miss Vanessa's heart beat behind the butternut-tree, where she stood shivering in her one dripping garment as if she had the ague upon her. "Then he came clear round this way for to see me," she said to herself, and began to warm with shy happiness.

"Where's Loughborough?"

"Oh, he's gone back to the buggy," explained McElroy, still lingering among the shrubs of the brake, in hopes of seeing Diana lift her arm again, or disclose the free curve of her throat where it blended with the ampler curve of breast and shoulder. He thought Loughborough a fool to have deprived himself willingly of the pretty picture of a woman bathing. He did not go back in his mind over those scenes in which Bathsheba, Ovid's Diana, and Rubens's nymphs figured, bewitching men's souls from them; he only thought of the present moment and of the scene before him, which was of the kind that has pleased men in all ages.

"I should think that the most sensible thing that you could do would be to go back to the buggy," was Diana's comment, as with magnificent arm-strokes she shot off down the current, intending not to stop short of Lowton's Gap, where the Run breaks into a rocky chasm, an effectual barrier to the best of swimmers.

"Since I am not needed for rescuing a drowning man or woman, I'll——" But the words were wasted, the young lady having glided past the hearing of them. McElroy still stood to watch the shining rift she made in the water as she floated forward. Since he was to feast his eyes no longer, he converted the begun apology, trembling upon his lip, into the strain,—

"A hundred months have passed, Lorina,"

turned on his heel and tramped across the under-brush to the buggy, where Loughborough sat impatiently whistling.

"Well, are you satisfied with your view of half-naked women?" was the question, ironically put.

"Half satisfied only," was the saucy rejoinder.

"What in the name of the devil, Loughborough, did you get away before having a glimpse of that girl's superb shoulders and bust?"

"I don't swear by the devil, McElroy," was the answer, with a frown.

With a shrug, the blonde troubadour threw into Lorina a wild sweetness, set off with more grace notes than usual, and the buggy wheels rolled forward. Diana, at the stream's bend, paused, leaned on her side, with a critical turn of her head, to catch the chords faintly fluting through the trees.

CHAPTER V.

At tea, that night, Miss Sarah Jane called the roll of all her jams, jellies, marmalades, and butters. What a rainbow of colors they made on the unbleached domestic table-cloth! The faint yellow-brown of the pear subdued the rich chestnut-brown of the quince-butter, while the straw-colored apple-jelly kept in check the almost too deep crimson of the strawberry preserve. The sweets being the belles of her pantry, were pleasantly disposed so as to provoke contrast in tints, for a Pughtown lady must find her picture-gallery upon her tea-table, if she finds it anywhere. You cannot long for pictures, if you have never seen them; but that does not prevent every human soul from having its craving for color. Miss Sarah Jane, therefore, displayed with an affectionately lavish hand her stewed cherries in solferino juice; her pumpkin butter of perfect mould; her "cow butter," printed to represent a swan, very much as a town-bred woman would exhibit her work in decorative painting.

There were viands enough to suit every palate which the human race has engendered, with but one fault, and that was a too great crowding of dishes. Each one seemed quarrelling for more room, that they all might better show themselves off. Indeed, some of the lesser dishes had to be slightly tilted up so as to be got in, and this derogated very much from their dignity, of course. Then those low, little salt-cellars would keep

getting under them and tripping them up; the dish of stewed cherries, in this way, very nearly discharged the whole of its contents upon the table-cloth. The blue and white China was set out; also the Holland napkins, a rare luxury; the three-pronged forks, and the steel- instead of the horn-handled knives. There was one cunning fancy which Miss Sarah Jane had worked into her plan of arrangements; one which no one had the sensibility to perceive,—pathetic waste of sentiment, which was, the placing of the most becoming dish in front of each guest. Loughborough, rough-and-ready, commanded the smoked sausage; Captain McElroy showed reflected upon his blonde face the hot flush of the sliced red tomatoes; Miss Spangler's crude coloring was brought into juxtaposition with the solemn pansy-purple of the damson-cheese. A pitcher of frothing milk stood in front of Miss Mary Jane; a low, "real cut-glass" dish containing curds over-sprinkled with pepper and deluged with the richest cream, made a spot of virginal purity and freshness in front of Diana Fontaine; while Miss Sarah Jane reserved for herself a capacious dish filled with the inevitable fried chicken flanked by crisp little paste-cakes, the whole reposing in a lake of white gravy.

If education means choosing, then here was a chance to display education in its subtlest form. Indeed, it would have puzzled the most discriminating brain as to which of the breads you must choose, for you could not partake of them all. The orthodox loaf of salt-rising bread, plain, it is true, but sweet and grainy, and of a firm texture like pound-cake, made you feel doubtful, in the more odorous presence of the hot

rusks standing on the corner of the table like a group of lovely young sisters, the pale yellow top-crusts varnished with a coating of sugar and white of egg, and taking the lamp-light in a playful, pleasant way. Miss Mary Jane tore these resisting members of one family apart ruthlessly, after which they all sat down on the dish, meek and flaky, as who would say, "United we stood, divided we fall" to somebody's share.

If the cake was on drill at dinner, it was now on a full-dress parade. There seemed to be no end to the variety. There were gold and silver cakes; marble, spice and layer cakes; jumbles rough on the top with sugar and finished off in the centre with a raisin; while as climax to the scene, Hecuba brought in from the shed-pantry a wide dish well packed with doughnuts, that smiled upon the company by means of the grease which had fried them; they lost no time in importuning the appetite of all present, you may rest assured, so inviting did they look.

Vanessa Spangler sat at the side of McElroy, the flush of conscious bashfulness on her cheek. She sought her plate with eyes that feared to meet his gaze, while to invitations that she should partake of this or that dainty she iterated and reiterated, "I don't choose any, Miss Sarah Jane, 'deed and 'deed I don't."

She might have spared herself the fireworks of expression, for McElroy had eyes only upon one,—that one, Diana. Miss Spangler, looking up at last, surprised his glance bent upon Diana with a warmth that shocked her. He had never looked so at her; that he could, was a revelation. She colored almost purple, her eyes distended with hysterical excitement. She seemed on the verge of an outburst of tears, to prevent

which she set herself to chewing a bit of cake in a hard, mechanical way, as if it had no taste in it. She was unnoticed by any of the party except Loughborough; his keen professional eye took in, with grave interest, each phase of this sudden metamorphosis. It is these heavy, inelastic temperaments that are slain by their passions. There was a sullen scowl upon her forehead when she turned to look at Diana, who sat on the same side of the table with her, but fronting McElroy.

Mountain water had given an unusual transparency to Miss Fontaine's skin, and the atmosphere had deepened its tone to an unwonted rose. A gown of tissue web, lavender in tint, opened at her throat, then took the gentle swell of her breast and narrowed at the waist, with but slight diminishment of curve. Her brown hair, damp from the bath, lay upon her shoulders in two plaits; perhaps they clung unpleasantly, impeding the movements of her throat, for she shook her head now and then impatiently, so as to displace them, after which they showed a wet trace upon the lavender gown. She was a natural girl; one endowed, fortunately, with innocent instincts. Voluptuousness in her was of the tender kind,—either softened down to an enthusiasm for beauty or heightened into a passion for the athletic. Up to the present day, her purposes had been whims; her ideas, fancies; her thoughts, dreams. She was unfettered as yet by the bonds of conventionality,—the world being to her a gentlewoman's park; a place half wild, half cultivated, in which to roam for beauty's, pleasure's, love's sake, and breathe the air of liberty. Like the forest, cities oftentimes breed courage especially of opinion. This quality

struck you in Diana. She was no slave to a narrow etiquette, but an empress, who framed her own code to suit her own taste. You could tell this by her spontaneity of feeling, her freedom of manner, her frankness of utterance, and, also, by the direct gaze with which she encountered the eye of man or beast. Sitting in front of McElroy, her arms appealed to him, dry, as much as they had done, wet; her loose sleeves showed them bare to the elbows; abundantly developed, they would have reminded a sculptor of a grand old frieze; an ordinary man of love.

McElroy tried to intercept a glance now and then as he made an occasion of handing her a dish of something; but Diana's glances were not to be decoyed by the will of a merely handsome fellow like McElroy. Besides which, she was out of touch with him now; irritated since he had disturbed them at the bath; but she was too proud to show her irritation otherwise than by a marked repose of demeanor. The modern Dianas, unlike the goddess of the bow, must hide their anger, for ours is a tamer life than the archaic one. The mantle of dignity amused and piqued the naughty McElroy, who loved to study women and their ways. In his eagerness to twitch it aside, he sent the arrow of suspicious jealousy deep into Miss Spangler's bosom.

Miss Sarah Jane, at the head of the table, her face flushed like a peony, conducted a conversation with Loughborough on strictly professional subjects; for it was not often that she had a doctor at her elbow into whose ear she could pour the account of her infirmities. She considered it a duty to need medicine just as she did, in affairs of the soul, to need grace.

To say that she clutched the opportunity would not be an exaggeration; for she felt that it was nothing short of a sensible economy to fortify herself, by means of professional advice, not only against the diseases which she now had, but against any which might come upon her during the next six months.

"Now, what's to pay, doctor? I've been a havin' of my neuralgy in spells as would fetch the tears to your eyes if you was by to see."

"The devil's to pay, madam. Look yonder, will you?" Loughborough waved his great muscular hand in the direction of several dishes.

Miss Sarah Jane gave a start. "Great Scott! Is it the stewed cherries as is turned over?" she cried. "I mistrusted that white dish as has the pestering little knobs on the bottom. It's *that* treacherous—"

"Nothing of the kind." Loughborough interrupted the vision of a red sea of cherry-juice deluging her well-mangled table-cloth. "But, my dear Miss Sarah Jane, how can you expect to keep clear of neuralgia with such piles and piles of food as you spread before us. You live too high. It is down-right intemperance, the kind the doctors have to preach against."

"Why, that aren't anything to brag on. Jest you take your supper up to Fawnystawk's, and then you'll see what the eating is." She gave a little flattered laugh, having relished Loughborough's censure of her abundance: it seemed a back-handed compliment. So he had to make himself plainer.

"Fawnystawk or no Fawnystawk, you'll kill yourself before your time, Miss Sarah Jane, indeed you will, mixing six different kinds of preserve at a sitting."

He waved his hand again towards the gay little moulds scattered about the tea-table in such profusion.

"One preserve, one jelly, one stew, and three butters," corrected Miss Sarah Jane. "Why, there's some folks as never cut a biscuit open without a spread of one kind or another; but I've took your physics and the patent physics as I've sent to Win*ches*ter for, and I'm not shet of the neuralgy yet. You may talk about preserves and sech? but I've got a pore appetite, Doctor Loughborough. There's times and times as I don't tetch so much as a morsel of bread *that* big." She measured off a section of her hand with exultation; for she was proud of her well-stocked larder, but she was also proud of her "pore appetite."

"What good does it do to let food alone one day, then pay a visit, and live high the next? Regularity is the secret of a healthy body, which is like any other machine. Come, Miss Sarah Jane, you are a sensible woman. Break your physic bottles, throw away that foul, fermenting stuff you call your preserves, and I'll promise you a holiday from neuralgias and all aches and pains."

Loughborough spoke with rough good-humor, but Miss Sarah Jane shook her head obstinately.

"It's a poor showing when the doctors give over believing in their own physic," threw in Miss Mary Jane Fontaine from the opposite side of the table.

"Madam, physic no more cures the sick man than whipping does the bad boy. Both are expedient sometimes, but not often; and it's the honest doctor who'll tell you so."

"What is to cure the diseases, ef it's not the physics

as God Almighty has laid away in the ground?" asked Miss Sarah Jane, thinking she had the stronger side of the argument.

"Common sense," was Loughborough's laconic answer, folding up his napkin with elaborate care.

"Aren't you robbing God of his glory when you talk that way?" inquired Miss Mary Jane, the shadow of a rebuke upon her passive countenance. "The Lord made us poor, weak, sick creatures," she added, with piteous self-abasement.

"Begging your pardon, the Lord didn't do any thing of the kind. He isn't such a bad workman," was Loughborough's retort. "If you are poor and weak and sick, it's your own doing. The physic which Miss Sarah Jane talked of as being laid away in the ground, is hid, I'd have you ladies to know, so fast that we have hard work to find it; and happy, I say, is he who never does find it. But I've made too long a lecture for such a kind hostess as you are, Miss Sarah Jane. Besides which it is growing dark, and it is high time we were getting along the road," pushing back his chair. In this part of the country it was always the men who made the motion to start.

If Loughborough was a bully, he was such a kindly, honest one that the country-siders did not mind being bullied by him. He showed them his horns once in a while; but then "He's so good-dispositioned," they were wont to say, as if defending a favorite steer. It was one of Loughborough's principles that the doctors and preachers, between them, ought to teach the people how to live; but he did not receive much assistance from the preachers, for they and the farmers were

ignorant together. The curse of this region being the fatalism of the farmer and the superstition of the parson, Loughborough strove to fight the two-headed monster, but he often thought that he made no headway at all.

McElroy leaned pensively against the honeysuckles of the front porch, feeling himself rebuffed. Vanessa sat down on the wooden step at his feet as meek as any spaniel, hoping that the spirit would move him to come and take a seat beside her. Miss Sarah Jane stood still for a few seconds to enjoy her unusual full dress. "The old girl is on a very heavy dike," thought McElroy, measuring her from head to foot with a faint smile of amusement that acted as sauce piquante to his melancholy. The good lady wore black velvet bands upon her wrists, secured with buckles; a pink bridle about her throat held attached to it a tiny silk camphor bag, which, in her mind, was an amulet to ward off diseases. Her hair was combed back from her forehead so tightly that the strands had seceded from the union, and, standing apart, showed stripes of white scalp alternating with stripes of black hair; indeed, there was so much regularity in this striping that one might have supposed the arrangement one of design. Her gown of Mozambique, pink and a little wiry, gave her the air of being very much dressed up. She had taken her place at the tea-table, fearful lest she should sit the back widths of this frock into wrinkles. This fear had soon evaporated, however, and now Miss Sarah Jane, who was secretly wishing in her heart of hearts that Grat Fontaine could see her now as she looked in her treasured finery, darted off at last to the garden to make up a bouquet for this adored object.

It was the wane of a delicious summer twilight; the earth inflated its lungs gently and sent out its breath again, a rich steaming fragrance; the air above the clove-pinks was heavy with spice. Diana stood on the further edge of the garden, listening to the whippoorwills that announced their names from a group of ash-trees as distinctly as any human bipeds could have done. As Loughborough approached her, he observed that there hung in the west clouds of pale lavender like Diana's dress, and in the east clouds of a pale rose-tint like her cheeks; for when a young woman is by, men are apt to merge all space extension into her being.

"There has been a change in the driving programme, Miss Fontaine," he said, coming up close to the young lady, who at his words started out of a revery. "Hecuba is to go with Wesley in your aunt's wagon. She has been promised, I believe, a visit to some kin-people in Pughtown for harvesting. McElroy will ride Patsy, for it is far too late for you to go horseback alone, so I have come to offer you a seat in my buggy. May I have the honor of driving you, Miss Fontaine?"

"Yes, certainly; thank you very much."

Diana's quick assent was one of the marks of her adaptability of nature,—this accessibleness being one of her charms; for, like a wave of the sea, she took shape from the wind and color from the sky.

"But Patsy has the side-saddle on. Mr. McElroy cannot ride that," demurred Diana.

"You never saw the saddle McElroy couldn't ride, Miss Fontaine, nor the horse he couldn't master, saddle

or no saddle." It was one of Loughborough's principles to give the devil his due.

The bath, the change of scene, the warmth of the long summer-day, the sudden approach of night that startles one in July, had, with cumulative force, plunged Diana into a condition of languor which Loughborough was not slow in perceiving. She was in no mood to contradict. "You are tired, too. The ride home in the buggy will be a rest. Come, let us catch the remnant of twilight upon that rough hill-road before you get to the forks; the moon will not be up until late to-night."

He led the way, she following, through a serpentine border, a dense mass of portulaca, now shut up. A turn through the quick-set hedge showed them the spring wagon preparing for departure. Hecuba sat in front by colored Wesley; Miss Mary Jane, at the back, was receiving from the hands of their hostess a pot of jam and a basket of cherries, which she proceeded to stow away under the seat.

"Well, I think in my heart," she said, "you've got us pretty well loaded down now."

"Haven't you room for the crullers? The lieutenant's fond of crullers," cried Miss Sarah Jane.

Miss Mary Jane shook her head.

"Well, here's the bokay. I was mighty sorry as there weren't more roses out; but tell Lieutenant Fontaine (she always gave him his war title) I'll take it sadly to heart ef I don't lay eyes on him at the Round-Hill bush meeting. Tell him, ef he'll go, Miss Mary Jane, that I'll make him the beautifullest chicken-pie ever he set tooth in."

It was a habit of this good lady to send sweet-hearting messages to Grat. They certainly did him no harm, as he never received them; but they appeared to be a relief to Miss Sarah Jane's heart.

"Here, Vanessy, get in, child; you'll be lef' behind ef you don't look out." Miss Spangler was hoisted into the wagon by the gentlemen, a kind of woodeny despair making her muscles more inelastic than usual. Diana thought her very like a Dutch doll; but this Dutch doll had a heart, and it was bleeding.

"Look out for the bad place in the road as you come nigh the forks," was Miss Sarah Jane's parting admonition, and the spring-wagon drove off.

Then came Launce Loughborough's buggy. "Look out for that little girl as you have under your care, doctor. She's the neatest little fix in Frederick. Just don't you dump her out in that bad place this side the forks; hear." She thought it her duty to warn visitors of any pitfalls that might beset them on the way; for this was old-fashioned hospitality.

"Never you fear, Miss Sarah Jane," rejoined Loughborough, taking his seat in the buggy beside Diana, and gathering up the reins. "There isn't a foot of the road lying betwixt your gate and Pughtown that I couldn't go blindfold."

Diana was occupied with crushing her lavender muslin into its right place in the buggy, when a face bent towards her, and a voice soft with reproach, penitence, and appeal murmured in her ear, "Aren't you going to say good-night, Miss Fontaine?"

"Oh, it is you, Captain McElroy. Good-night," was the careless rejoinder.

Intense physical admiration from man disposes a woman to cruelty. With the ex-Confederate captain, Diana felt within her softness alternate with cruelty. She knew her beauties, with woman's keenness, and she realized that McElroy knew them, too. His admiration was of the kind that exalts and humiliates by turns. The voice that said, "Good-night, Captain McElroy," was cool, repellingly cool. McElroy understood that he was not forgiven for the moment's lingering at the pool; but he enjoyed the transient disfavor; it gave him something to do, some misery to enjoy and look helplessly handsome over. He raised his gauntleted hand to his head after the style of the military salute, and, with a deeply audible sigh, rode off on Patsy. He sat her side-saddle with careless ease, and Diana, catching the sad, patient smile as he passed her, felt her heart ache never so little.

The horseman disappeared, the buggy followed the road-furrows, and Loughborough, who had watched the pantomime, albeit not seeming to do so, said, after a few minutes' silence,—

"Well, how do you like this country now?"

"Oh, lovely." She felt too indolent, too absorbed, to seek a more discriminating epithet. A young lady's adjective, and one not often sincere.

"You do not believe me?"

"You look at nature through the eyes of others; through literature, for instance."

"Explain."

"You rave over a skylark because you have met one; not in nature, but in a poem. You commend the patriotism of one of Scott's heroes; yet here, in your

fatherland, you do not feel with those who have mixed their blood with dust for the great Cause; and I think you would withhold your sympathy because many of the patriots you have met cannot parse. Is not this true? Well, that is what I call insincerity."

With Grat Fontaine one had to use tact; with McElroy, imagination; with Loughborough, will-power. This was the quality he appealed to. Diana Fontaine had plenty of the first two qualities, but not much of the last; induction into it both surprised and fascinated her.

"Insincerity is a harsh word," she objected, but with a touch of humility.

"Well, for example, what do you think of the people, now that you have seen more of them?"

"That they are picturesque."

He shook his head.

"What is the matter with that adjective? Surely, it is uncensurable."

"It is artificial. You think of the people as pictures, not as human beings; as contrasts to yourself, perhaps."

"Oh, Dr. Loughborough." She was too horrified to say more.

"Forgive me, if I hurt you, Miss Fontaine; but you know I'm a surgeon. I'm afraid I carry the knife in my disposition."

He leaned back in the buggy, allowed the reins to lie carelessly on his knee, and watched her face. That would tell him when to stop. He did not wish to go too far; but, with a certain keen-sightedness that marks those who have the habit of looking outside themselves, he perceived dangers ahead, growing out of her own

pleasure-loving, contrast-seeking, excitement-craving nature.

"Souls are alike. Do not find fault with the people so much as with their aspirations. They make a god of the body. If they worshipped a higher god, they would rise in proportion."

"What is the higher god?"

"The sensibilities are higher than the senses; but they are still the body, Miss Fontaine. The range is higher, but not so much higher as you might think. Even refinement-worship is a dangerous creed."

"Ah, Dr. Loughborough, you are what they call a leveller."

"Only so far as it is a question of humanity. I am not afraid of the word, though I do not like it."

"Do not hope to convert me. I am an aristocrat of the aristocrats in feeling. If I had lived in France during the Revolution, I should have died with the Bourbons; if I had lived in England at the time of the Protectorate, I should have given my life for the Stuarts."

The emptiest ideas gain a certain dignity when they are illustrated by history. Loughborough gave one of his deep, kindly, indulgent laughs, as he said,—

"I should never have suspected you of being so old-fashioned, Miss Fontaine. Suppose you had lived two hundred years ago, when aristocracy was a vexed question, instead of now here in plain, democratic Virginia, why, we should never have met."

His eyes twinkled so pleasantly that Diana could not be provoked. She said, playfully,—

"You have been leading the conversation and driving

the buggy, too; come, give me the reins. I am going to have my way for a while."

Loughborough surrendered them at once.

"Have your way, by all means, in every way but one."

"But?" interrogated Diana.

Loughborough's countenance grew serious. He paused for an instant before replying, yet there was no hesitation in his manner when he spoke.

"McElroy admires you, Miss Fontaine. Heaven knows I should not blame him for that; but he is not the man you would ever think of except as the acquaintance for the hour, of course, and——"

"Why, of course?" thought Diana.

Loughborough had no wish to lift the veil from McElroy's life. They had been comrades together, and were friends still. He decided to strike the chords of feeling in the young girl's bosom by allusion to Miss Spangler.

"For two years Roy McElroy has been receiving favors from the Spanglers, for Vanessa's sake, of course. He is under obligations to them of the most binding sort. In spite of this he has roused that girl's jealousy horribly. I saw it to-night at the tea-table. Beware, how you rouse it further, else some day you might reproach yourself."

"Reproach myself? What have I done?"

"Nothing, except to be fascinating. Restrain those fascinations for the sake of that poor girl whom I would have you think of as a suffering instead of a picturesque one; unless you could be brought to think of McElroy at any time seriously, which, of course, you could not."

"Why, of course?" again thought Diana. And a vision of McElroy kneeling at her feet in cavalry boots, deep cuffs, wide collar, wavy light-brown hair, peaked beard, heavy-lidded eyes, low-murmured words, suggested to her imagination a man who had it in his power to give a woman passionate devotion,—passionate and picturesque, like a hero of Bulwer, a Eugene Aram, a Pelham, and the like. The vision was so real that Diana bent forward unconsciously, and Loughborough translated her silence into resentment.

"Perhaps I am taking a liberty, Miss Fontaine, which you will think proper to rebuke. But I am a plain-spoken man, and I have never refrained from speech, when I thought that harm might grow out of silence, from any fear of etiquette."

The glance he bent upon her said, "Be angry with me if you will: I am not afraid. I do not live or die by men's anger." She was not a girl to turn away from frankness of speech.

"Silence is sometimes a passive benefit, sometimes an active evil," she murmured.

"Here it would be an active evil, believe me. You do not know, in your narrow woman's experience, the class of man to which McElroy belongs. Your uncle is too occupied with himself and his grievances to warn you. Your aunt, kind soul, walks through life with her eyes buttoned up, thinking that sin consists in seeing sin. You cannot know the schooling which the past six years have given the soldier of fortune, which McElroy is. And, lastly, you, with your particular disposition, could not possibly understand the laws that govern such natures as Vanessa Spangler's."

"But would Captain McElroy dream of marrying such a girl as she?"

Diana was aghast.

"You can never tell what a man's dreams are. Sometimes he has nightmares, you know."

"Yes; but he is so handsome, so spirited, so clever; while she——"

"Is a well-meaning young woman; rich for this country; useful. All this is to counterbalance his attractions. Why, if McElroy married her, he wouldn't have to do another stroke of work in his life."

"What gain with such a woman for his wife?"

"Conceptions of gain vary with the individual. I have seen men who used up their capability for honor and manliness during the war. I have seen men come out of this conflict, after fighting bravely, with every part of them sound—except the soul."

Diana recalled the hour on the knoll when McElroy had quoted the lines,—

"In the land where we were dreaming."

He, too, had alluded to nightmares; and she remembered wishing to rouse him out of his. Did she still wish it? She certainly had no thought of circumventing Miss Spangler. Her brain was not the one for stratagem; she was altogether the creature of moods and feelings. You could plunge her into despair by a couple of words, you could revive her with a look. She had the keen senses of a healthful animal; the quickness of the doe that *hears* a shadow. Just now, however, she only attended to that part of Loughborough's conversation which referred to McElroy;

his words whetted desire. To mate with Vanessa Spangler! It would be unnatural,—the union of the lark with the toad. She said as much.

Loughborough shook his head thoughtfully. "A man may make many mistakes in this world, but one he must not make, and that is treason." Then, with a sudden change of subject, "Lend me the reins, Miss Fontaine; we have come to that bad place near Lowton's Forks. There are several springs here which make the road swampy. It has grown quite dark; but I think we shall have the moon on that last mile of the Pughtown pike; then I'll give you some fast travelling, if you like."

It was dark, the purple darkness of a summer-night sky that shows no stars. Pine-trees rose up on either side of them, making a line of solid black in the surrounding obscurity; the buggy-wheels struggled through the marshy ground. There was a pleasant sense of security alternating with mystery. Loughborough's cheery voice encouraging the horse contrasted with the utter loneliness of the road.

"You must get dull, sometimes, at the Valley Farm," he said, after an interval, during which the horse picked its way out of the mud, finding at last a good hard road ahead. It snorted with pleasure, tasted with delicate hoof the compact slate groundwork, and then went flying along.

"I want you to know Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk. You would like her; young girls always do. Besides, she is connected with you by marriage," he continued. "She will call on you soon; then she wants to have you visit her. You will go, won't you?"

"I should like to," was the not very significant reply. He is engaged to her, thought Diana. Is she another Vanessa Spangler? Why do these men make such unequal matches, as if there were no other women in the world saving those Hessians. Diana did not feel hospitable to kin with a Hessian strain. It was well that Loughborough could not see the disdain which sprang into her countenance as she leaned her head against the hood of the buggy; but something made Loughborough say, a little proudly,—

"She is not only a good woman, but the handsomest in the county."

Diana pricked up her ears with woman's eagerness to hear about other women.

"Is she dark or fair?"

"Fair. General Rosser used to call her 'The Lily of the Valley.'"

"Dr. Loughborough, do tell me something about Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk, won't you?" then said Diana.

CHAPTER VI.

On the first Wednesday of September, 186–, just past midnight, several taps on the porch pillars underneath his bedroom window aroused 'Lias Fawnystawk from sleep. On the alert for surprises in those troublous war-times, he jumped out of bed, opened the casement cautiously, and thrust his head out. The moon, just setting, threw a dubious light on a couple of

Confederate soldiers, mounted and supporting another between them lying prone on his horse.

"Holloa!" said one of the horsemen, in a low, mysterious voice, as he caught sight of the old man; "here's a dying or dead man, I don't know which. Look to him, won't you? We must hurry like the devil, or the Yankees will be on us."

"Is that you, Grat Fontaine? Well, I'll be on hand in the cocking of a pistol."

Fawnystawk, having ascertained that his midnight guests were friends, drew in his head, and slipped into his clothes with a celerity only to be got by forty years of medical practice; then seizing from the bureau a night-lamp, and lighting it as he went, he stepped out into the hall.

At the stair-head, a young woman, candle in hand, awaited him anxiously. "Father," she half-whispered, and the hand that held the candle trembled; "they have been knocking against the porch with the hilt of their sabres. Do you think it could be the Yankee scouts?"

"Nuck, nuck, nuck," growled the old gentleman, proceeding down the flight of wooden steps with alacrity. "It's Grat Fontaine and some of Ashby's cavalry; and there's a wounded man you'll have 'tend to, Lou-i-sy; so get your fixings ready."

His hand was on the knob of the front door; he slid the bolt, and threw it open wide. Dr. Fawnystawk and his daughter stepped out upon the porch; by the low, drooping moon, making more shadow than light oyer the landscape, they saw two horsemen leap to the ground, keeping their arms through their bridle-

reins, so as not to be parted an instant from their horses, the best friends a man can have when a regiment is on his track; at the same time they lowered between them the stark figure of another man, whom they heaved to the floor of the porch, and then bounded swiftly back to their saddles, where they held a brief parley with the doctor in the same low, cautious tones. The young woman sank upon her knees beside the insensible soldier, absorbed with pity.

"We may pay for this by a bullet through the brains," was Fontaine's muttered comment.

"Bullet or no bullet, this is a man whose life is worth saving," his comrade replied.

"Hush! Do you hear anything?" whispered Fontaine, in mysterious staccato.

The three men listened; you could have heard their hearts beat. Then Lou-i-sy rose from her knees, moved to the edge of the porch, bent her head, and gave that finer sensibility of a woman's ear to the midnight air.

"I heard nothing," said Fawnystawk.

"Yes, I hear a sound," corrected Lou-i-sy, coming close to the group, and fixing large, awe-struck eyes on the two cavalrymen. "It is far off, but it seems like a tramp."

"Now's our chance, then," said Grat Fontaine; "for, see, the moon has set."

"Jump the fence, cross the field, get into the woods by Smoke's school-house," admonished Fawnystawk in a stage-whisper; but the two soldiers were already off, and very soon the stroke of horse-hoofs, muffled in sod, told the ear that they had cleared the fence and were galloping like mad on the course Fawnystawk had

suggested, to join their battalion, a couple of miles below Winchester.

"They are out of danger this time," muttered the physician, turning his attention now to the wounded man. "Give a hand, Lou-i-sy; we must drag him into the hall."

Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk had a stout arm as well as a stout heart, and this was not the first time she had engaged in scenes like this. The women of the South who lived for five years on the "Debatable Land," bounded on one side by the Northern, on the other side by the Southern, pickets, knew what it was to confront death, anguish, pain, starvation, bloodshed. The demands made upon their courage and sympathy were ceaseless; and, to their honor be it spoken, the demand was seldom made in vain. That was the generation which engendered fortitude, the courage of woman. May their daughters and granddaughters not prove degenerate in the sublime virtues which are the honor of their sex.

Lou-i-sy set herself to work, and with her father's help dragged the soldier across the porch, over the threshold and into the hall-way. Then she ran and brought a couple of blankets, which the two succeeded in placing underneath him. Dr. Fawnystawk pressed his ear to the man's heart, but shook his head as he muttered, "That are a bad job."

They got his coat off; then they turned him over on his face, and tore his shirt open down the middle of the back, for the ball had entered in at the breast, and it was lodged under a circular bluish spot between the shoulder-blades. With the flashing of that ball consciousness had gone, and life was a question.

Lou-i-sy, having brought forth her goodly store of bandages, held the burning tallow so as to throw its rays in the right direction for the eye of the surgeon, who was beginning to probe with the swiftness of a practised hand.

"Here's the ugly critter," he said, after a few minutes of silent work, and from the broken flesh drew forth the Minie-ball and held it aloft dripping with blood. In the twinkling of an eye, while he held his arm high, it was made evident to father and daughter that the house was surrounded by armed men. It was as sudden as a Texan norther, and as chilling.

Fawnystawk had scarcely time to let escape from betwixt his teeth the words, "Banks and his divils," when the front door was flung open and in burst a dozen or more blue-coats. They were in reality a reconnoitring party, and they were following the tracks of Fontaine and his fellow-at-arms.

"A rebel soldier!" cried the foremost man, while those who followed took up the word, ending it in a shout; and immediately the squad gathered around the impromptu pallet whereon was stretched the wounded man, his face downward, his arms supine at his sides, his shirt gaping, his flesh between the shoulder-blades wrenched open, so as to disgorge the Minie-ball, which Dr. Fawnystawk still held aloft dripping with blood, his arm almost paralyzed by the suddenness of the surprise.

"Yes, gentlemen, a dead rebel; if that will do you any good," he said, after a moment's deliberation, coolly laying down the Minie-ball and pulling up coat-sleeves, preparatory to washing his hands in the basin of water held for him by his daughter.

"Dead rebel be damned! They ain't worth much when they are alive," cried the head man of the party. "But you see, old gentleman, where there is fowls of this kind so close, there's apt to be birds of the same feather a little further off, mayhap. I guess we'll have to look around a little and see what kind o' things you stow away in your cuddies; isn't that what you call 'em?"

"Cuddy-holes is the properest word for them things you are a-talkin' about; but any word will fit; just suit yourself," said Dr. Fawnystawk, who was not without his vein of facetiousness when it came to the worst. His sang-froid had served him in good stead many a time.

"The house is yours, gentlemen, make yourself at home. I never grudged a view of my up-stairs to any one. Lou-i-sy, here, keeps it proud and clean; but you'll excuse me from going along with you. I've been up there before, and I'm tired, too, 'cause I didn't get my sleep out to-night; too much cump'ny around."

Fawnystawk wiped his hands deliberately, took his seat in a horse-hair arm-chair which matched the sofa, and addressed the rest of his speech to the night-lamp, condemning the smoky flame it gave.

His words were received with ha-ha's by the soldiers, who, in their hard lives, enjoyed a bit of fun now and then. They crowded out of the room; took the stairs, some of them, at a few bounds; while others of them dragged along behind, letting the points of their bayonets dent the wood-work as they mounted.

They went cautiously at first, fearing some possible ambush. The next cuddy-hole might mean a sabre-

thrust or pistol-shot for its first explorer. The garret might hold, as in a fortalice, a troop of fierce Southrons instead of last winter's store of nuts or last summer's gift of sage. No such stowaways being come upon, they gathered courage as they proceeded. From those chambers above stairs, wont to be the abode of peace, came the sound of tramp, tramp, tramp. The house seemed alive, the very walls shouted, the windows laughed, the floors grumbled, but in the midst of the din the Confederate soldier slept the sleep of unconsciousness, neither stirring nor breathing.

Very soon the blue-coats trooped back, disappointment darkening their features.

"Look here," cried the captain; "you've been in league with this yere rebel." He pointed to the wounded man. "'T aren't worth while to say you wasn't; so's we can't find any one else, we'll have to carry you off as prisoner."

"And leave this young woman by her lone self,—neither man, woman, chick, nor child on the place?" asked Fawnystawk, his paternity touched.

"She's got the soldier yonder to protect her," interrupted the captain, with sarcastic emphasis.

"He's better nor a dead man," retorted Fawnystawk.

"I don't know what you mean by better nor a dead man; but you've got to come along with us. The lady won't be alone along. It's all but daylight now; and I see you've got neighbors round you."

"Father, I ain't afraid, 'deed I ain't. I'll get Cousin 'Becca Fawnystawk to stay with me. Don't let any fear for me make you take the oath."

These last words were murmured in a whisper to her father; but they drew attention to the young woman who had stood so quietly by without speaking until the present moment. The violet silk kerchief enfolding her light wavy hair and knotted under her rounded chin shadowed a face of Madonna-like gentleness; her gown, of homespun, was only noticeable because, being thrown on hastily without stays, it revealed more than she would have wished, of her luxuriant outline.

An instant of silence followed, which Fawnystawk broke with the words, peevishly uttered, "Don't they know how to be purlite to the ladies up there in Yankee-land?"

"None of your Southern chivalry for us, if you please. It riles my blood to hear that devil-begotten word chivalry."

"I didn't know but what it was you yourself as used that word firstest," said Fawnystawk, slyly, noting with satisfaction that the daylight was struggling for admittance into the room through its half-closed blinds. "I wouldn't use it if I didn't like it. Suit yourself; don't mind me."

"What's the use of devising any further, when you've got to go along with us as a prisoner. Will you go of your own accord, or shall we take you?"

"I couldn't think of givin' you that much trouble, cap'n. Let me blow out the lamp first,—oil's dear these days,—and kiss Lou-i-sy. Be a good girl, honey, and not o'er wasteful with the tallow."

"Good-by, father. Don't, for heaven's sake, don't take the oath." The violet kerchief rested on 'Lias

Fawnystawk's shoulder, and the violet eyes stretched wide with entreaty as these words were murmured in his ear.

While the conversation between father and daughter was going forward, a sergeant, with three stripes on his sleeves and two scars on his left cheek, was appropriating a souvenir of the Confederate, who all agreed was too far gone to be taken along as a prisoner. This souvenir was a buckle, shield-shaped, and bearing Virginia's coat-of-arms and the device,—"Sic semper tyrannis," fastened to a military scarf, and lying with other belongings upon the floor. He picked it up, gave an admiring look, then, unfastening it from the depending scarf, slipped the trinket into his pocket. It was a small affair, no theft; for the soldier in war-times treats himself to whatever he likes and can make himself master of. He believes in the absolutism of physical power, in the despotism of office, and, reckless of life, his philosophy is a wild fatalism. The sergeant, having tarried for a few minutes to execute this by-play, hastened now after the departing squad, who, with Fawnystawk in their midst, took abrupt leave, leaving Lou-i-sy alone, at the break of a chill September morning, with a dying or dead man, she knew not which.

The gray-eyed dawn looked through shutters at a blue-eyed sister standing in the dusky hall-way, pale, anxious, startled; for an instant despair seized her; she turned, first, cold, then numb, and feared that she might faint. She looked down at the man lying prone on his breast upon the blankets, and realized that she was his sole dependence now. Touching one hand

with the other to see if they had feeling in them, she thrust, with one huge effort, self from her mind, for activity is a better nervine than ammonia. Then she kneeled down upon the floor and tried to turn him over upon his back. This was a severe task for a woman's unaided arms; but she succeeded at last, and her reward was to find that he lived beyond a doubt; that his breath was returning, though with a catch in it. She dressed the red gash in his breast, and then set herself to work to make the house tidy.

At noon, Cousin 'Becca Fawnystawk came over from the other side of Brandy Hill to "keep cump'ny with Lou-i-sy," as she said.

For three days the wounded man languished upon the shores of eternity; but good nursing can do much, and a sound constitution, more. Was it not Hercules who wrestled with Death and snatched Alcestis from his clasp?

On the third day Lou-i-sy had her patient moved to the best bedroom upstairs. Life, color, speech, came back to him there, lying betwixt rose-scented linen sheets, and under a home-made quilt gorgeous enough to cheer the most morbid fancy.

One afternoon he watched the sunbeams dropping their golden ovoids on the rag carpet, Lou-i-sy sitting in a low chair where the dimity curtains parted in front of the west window. Her lap was full of gray yarn, as she was heeling a pair of socks. The sun shot glittering fasces on the wood-work of the window-casing behind her. They made a pretty nimbus for a woman's head. The invalid let go the golden ovoids and surveyed the lady with his dreamy, questioning gaze.

His attitude was one of patience, but his feelings were otherwise; they chafed at enforced quiescence.

"You always speak of me as 'he' and 'him,' Miss Fawnystawk. You ought to know by name the man who owes to you his life. I am Launce Loughborough, of Ashby's Brigade."

"I knew you were of Ashby's Brigade," answered the knitter, going to the fireplace and laying a bunch of fagots on the bright-faced dogs, for the air had a keen bite.

A sigh came from the pillow, and a voice said, "It will be months before I can join my regiment. I am a doctor, and I know that. Meanwhile the Yankees are centring about Winchester. It is hard to lie quiet here, and Jackson sweeping up the Valley."

Miss Fawnystawk nodded; there was nothing for her to say: she was a woman of action, not words.

"As soon as possible, I must be moved into Southern lines; for if the Yankees should find me here, they—— But they cannot take me prisoner while I have my good pistol underneath my pillow."

"Lieutenant Fontaine and Captain McElroy loped up as far as the vineyard, yesternight, to find out whether you could be moved as yet. I told them, no."

"Not quite yet," returned the sick man, with no querulousness in his voice, but self-controlled patience. "When I die, it shall be on a field of battle, and not on a feather-bed. I shall not cheat the brigade of a soldier."

A moment later he said, "Have mercy on me, and read something aloud, Miss Fawnystawk. I must get

out of myself, out of Virginia, out of the century. Won't you help me to take such a leap?"

Miss Fawnystawk looked as if she would have helped him willingly to mount to the stars, had she known how.

At his answer, "Read what you like," she hesitated. Books had always been to her a task, not a solace. Sausages, quilts, preserves, and flowers had been the vents of her over-charged feelings. She went out of the room, however, returning almost immediately with a large volume, from which she began to read with a kind of solemn dignity. This volume was the family Bible, and her selection was the fiftieth Psalm, her mother's favorite in that lady's last illness.

The listener turned uneasily; presently he cried out, "Not that, please; it makes me feel as if I were lying in my coffin, and some one was reading the funeral service over me."

Lou-i-sy stopped reading at once, but she looked puzzled; she had felt the Bible to be the most proper mental occupation for an invalid. She remembered vividly reading a chapter every day from that blessed book to her mother when fastened to the paralytic's couch.

"Have you a novel?" Loughborough asked, a gleam of hope breaking upon his thin features.

"Yes."

She remembered a copy of Beulah in the bookcase, which her heart would have chosen from the very first, had she dared to force upon her patient a literary taste she was by no means sure of. She brought it now and began again. Loughborough tried not to listen; if he

could but go to sleep and become unconscious of the diabolical twaddle she was pronouncing with a scrupulousness of care of itself provoking. In vain. His mind became painfully lucid and fastened itself upon every exaggerated simile and false position which characterized the tale. Fastening his deep-set gray eyes upon Lou-i-sy sitting in front of the dimity curtains, the nimbus at the back of her head, he said, with a kind of mirthful tolerance, "You have a right to think me hard to please as well as basely ungrateful, and you so kind; but, upon my word, I cannot stand that book."

"You aren't hard to please," she answered, gently; "but I don't know as we've anything else 'cept'n' the medical books."

Loughborough laughed outright. "Medical books are more in my line; but I would not let you punish me, so I will certainly not let myself punish you. Look in the bookcase once more, and let me know the names of what you have. I am on your hands for two or three weeks more, Miss Fawnystawk. We must make the time profitable."

Of course, Miss Fawnystawk obeyed orders. When she returned for the third time to Loughborough's bedside, it was with an armful of dusty calfskin tomes; most of them old school-books or works on surveying, —the shabby genteels of a library, rustic, entirely conservative, and unsubjected to change.

Loughborough looked the books over languidly, then selecting one, he said, "Milton seems the most promising. How would you like to read that?"

Lou-i-sy had never heard of Milton, but she was agreeable, of course; so into Milton they plunged.

At first, Miss Fawnystawk felt a little shocked at encountering such names as Adam and Eve, familiar to her only on the sacred page, but a sacrilege elsewhere. After a while, however, she became accustomed to this, and she thought them very nice sort of people. Lucifer and Pandemonium made her open her eyes wide. She was sorry for the devils, and threw the mantle of unquestioning charity over every personage in the epic, from Ithuriel down. The part in which she took most delight was Eden and its flowers, which brought her home-bred imagination to her own garden.

Loughborough smiled at her uncensuring, girlish acceptance of everything. For his part, he thought Adam a priggish fellow, a didactic sort of Cambridge professor without clothes; Eve, a paper-doll woman cut out by measure to suit a husband's theories; the angels, proctors, unburdened with the official gown, spying upon the felicity of the wedded pair,—the whole a university turned loose in a garden, whose very flowers were the cold mosaic work of art rather than the growth of sap and living tissues. Had Diana been reader, she would have patted John Milton on the back with the light touch of a nineteenth-century hand. She would have said, "He is lovely to have a bronze bust of for your library table; or he would make a dignified presence on the top-shelf of your best book-case; or would not L'Allegro and Il Penseroso be charming companion studies in marble for the parlor mantel?" She would have prattled by the hour, saying, "A few lines in Comus are nice to learn by heart; but Adam costs me a laugh, silly Eve a frown, and the angels a long, protracted yawn."

But Diana was not reader; she was not here with her blending of strength and weakness, which made her fascinating to some, but exasperating to others; more so than if she had been consistently weak throughout.

Milton was interrupted several times before he was finished. The Garden of Eden was invaded by a band of scouts from Milroy's Division. With a glance at the man lying helpless against his pillows, and the words, "He ain't worth the parole," the scouts departed, leaving the invalid to the gentler sway of Eve and the milder atmosphere of Eden.

The country grew more and more unsettled, for Milroy's iron heel pressed hard upon the Valley; so it was important to get Loughborough, as he grew into the stage of convalescence, out of the way of the Yankee troopers.

On a dark night, therefore, towards November, he was lifted by his comrades, Fontaine and McElroy, into an ambulance brought for the purpose to the edge of the wood, placed upon a bed made carefully by Lou-i-sy upon the floor of the wagon, and jolted over rocky back-roads to a farm-house some dozen miles away, within the space marked by Southern picket-lines. Here he would be safe from proffers of the oath of allegiance and from Northern prisons until such time as he should be ready to join his ranks again.

Dr. Fawnystawk's imprisonment had been of short duration. The oath had been offered and had been declined by him; so he was thrown into the "Old Capitol" at Washington to await trial. In the course of a few weeks he was tried as a suspicious character,

hiding Confederate soldiers about his house; but on account of lack of evidence and witnesses, he was finally discharged. It was a winter made up of excitement alternating with intervals of dulness. There were no servants about the place; Lou-i-sy had to drag from the Devil's-Hollow, a beautiful bit of woodland in sight of the house, tree branches to supply the fire that cooked her father's dinner or that warmed his reflective legs, as he sat in the dining-room hearth-place, his chair tilted, his feet lifted to the heights of the mantel-shelf. He had the Hessians' belief in the manly prerogative, and never did a stroke of work that could be avoided.

One afternoon, at the close of February, he looked on in comfortable indolence as Lou-i-sy, uncomplaining, uncriticising, brought into the room a basketful of sticks and laid them on the dogs. "She's a good girl," he meditated over a newspaper, read and re-read, and three weeks old, a gift bestowed by the captain of a Yankee foraging party who had passed that way; "she's a good girl, Lou-i-sy is. I do'ent regret as she ain't ever married yet. There's the fifth commandment, and it's the most important, 'case it's the first one as goes with a promise. Happen somebody 'll come along, one of these days, and take us, house and all together. When a man has worked night and day nigh onto forty years, he has bought his rest, and paid for it, too. Why, one-half of these youngsters that have gone from hereabouts into the army of Northern Virginia, why, I brought them into the world myself with these two hands." Thus singing to himself hymns of praise, he cocked his feet a bit higher on the mantel-shelf,

fastened his shrewd eyes on his newspaper, and began re-reading it for the fourth time.

Hard labor had certainly not disagreed with Lou-i-sy. She was the picture of health and neatness when she sat down a moment later, beside the deal-table, and began work with hands wonderfully fair-looking, considering all the labor they achieved. When doing work not a woman's, her father was wont to say, in his complacent way, "Never mind the dirt nor the cinders, honey; black hands make bright money. That was always my motto and my father's aforetime." Lou-i-sy's present occupation, however, was of the womanly kind, not offensive to her somewhat dainty tastes. She had on her knee a flap of Yankee tent canvas; this, having been previously soaked and bleached, she was proceeding to ravel out. The stout thread, wound into balls, would in the course of time be knitted up into socks for her father and stockings for herself. Thus did the tents of the invader become a treasure to the needy Southron.

Lou-i-sy's eyes travelled occasionally to the pearl-white cloud that, stretching across the heavens from pole to pole, diffused a milky light through the green geraniums banked in the windows, and gave a promise of snow.

Like Penelope, in the ancient tale, whether weaving or unravelling, Lou-i-sy's thoughts were often wanderers. Her Odysseus, where was he? But for all the wandering of thought or glance, her hands travelled none the less swiftly and continuously. Wandering thoughts return, wandering eyes fly back; the latch is lifted, the door is opened, and in steps Odysseus,—in

other words, Launce Loughborough. He comes up to his blue-eyed nurse, takes a seat at her side in the straight-back, gray-painted wooden chair, and says,—

"How do you do and good-by," in one breath. "Miss Fawnystawk, congratulate me. I go back to-morrow morning to my regiment."

"To-morrow!" Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk was never quick in taking ideas. She dropped her tent canvas, and her hands lay idle among the threads while she perused Loughborough's face anxiously. He was still very pale, and his breadth of chest was the more emphasized by its hollowness. His deep-set eyes held a triumphant brilliancy, the soldier's heart having leaped into them.

"Yes, to-morrow." He glanced around the room; so quiet had been his entrance, so quiet Lou-i-sy's greeting, that Dr. Fawnystawk did not arouse from the nap into which he had fallen. Can you blame him? The fourth reading of a newspaper already three weeks old is not conducive to mental vivacity.

"I am come to take leave of you, kind friend, to whom I owe so much."

Loughborough was not given to the making of pretty speeches, even those of gratitude; but the smile which accompanied his words had in it something ineffable, like the pronouncing of a benediction.

"And we won't see you, perhaps, ever again?"

There was a little quaver in Lou-i-sy's interrupted staccato; but Loughborough, not being on the watch, did not perceive it.

"Why not?" He shrugged his shoulders carelessly; then he added, "No, we are too good friends not to meet somewhere."

"When all is over, you will not come here; you will go back to your family?" Lou-i-sy's question was accompanied with the downward sweep of white lids which gave an air of intense resignation to her countenance.

He shook his head soberly. "Family? I have none. Cousins, yes; but what are they? The homestead was burned to the grass after Manassas; my mother died from the shock; my brother fell on the field,—that was all of us."

"Will you forget us, here? You may be leaving us for good, you know?"

The voice quavered a little more; this time it attracted Loughborough's attention. He saw that the red roses of Miss Fawnystawk's cheek were turned into white ones.

"Forget you! Impossible while I live. If I should stay forever on the battle-field, as so many brave boys have done before me, why, I ——"

He stopped speaking all at once: Miss Fawnystawk was weeping.

"Dear young lady," he asked, in an awed undertone, "are those tears for me?"

She made no effort to restrain them now. She was as honest in her grief as she was in her tranquil joys. She knew not the dignity of the mask. Her nature, incomplex, was direct in word, in look, in act. With child-like simplicity she raised her handkerchief to her eyes and sought to wipe away the drops; straightway others began to flow. It was a sisterhood of mourners not to be parted easily.

As soon as she could find her voice, she said,

brokenly, "Suppose you should be wounded, and I not there to nurse you."

She could not achieve the thought of separation; the effort made but the climax to her trouble. She leaned her head upon the edge of the deal-table and allowed her tears to flow forth in unvexed freedom. Loughborough, distressed, laid his hand upon her head. The soldier within him was hiding behind the man, and the man had a tear in his eye.

With a sudden snort, Dr. Fawnystawk woke up and looked around him. Surely, here was a change in his domestic drama,—Lou-i-sy the steadfast, the equable, not at work, but in tears; Loughborough bending over her, with hand upon her head. The old doctor was not long in piecing thoughts together. He went back to his old fancy, "Happen somebody 'll come along, one of these days, and take us, house and all together;" so his voice called out from the chimney-corner with a cheery sharpness in it, for the old Hessian was wont to look on the comfortable side of life,—

"Lou-i-sy crying? Hold on, child, and save the salt; the war aren't going to last long. I haven't been a-working nigh on to forty years without knowing what I'm a-talking about. Just you ride after Jeb Stuart hard as you can, Dr. Loughborough. Whip the Yankees; come back, and I'll give you my Lou-i-sy. She knows how to cook the victuals for the best man a-living, that she do. There isn't a doctor on this circuit without'n it's me. Come back to us when the war is over, take my practice, and my house and my young 'oman. I'm getting old; it's time for my Sabbath to be a-coming."

Loughborough could hardly refrain from smiling at this proposal, made though it was in singleness of heart. He thought of Fawnystawk and himself associated in medical practice as of a horse and an ox yoked.

He looked at Lou-i-sy. Her head was uplifted. When the war is over. She seized the thought and hugged it. Her father's words had opened up a vista. Her countenance was bathed in a soft, empurpled light. Love and desire sat in her eyes. She expressed her tenderness as frankly as she had done her grief.

"When the war is over, you will come back to us, won't you?"

Loughborough's cheek caught some of the glow from hers as he answered, with solemnity,—

"If it is your wish, Lou-i-sy, I will. I owe you my life; from this time forward it is yours. If the South win, I will come back to lay my share of her glory at your feet. If—if—the Confederacy goes up, if the Cause is lost, I will still come back and lay my share of her affliction at your feet, also."

Lou-i-sy smiled through tears. She did not want courage for anything short of separation; her belief went with her hopes that her knight would win.

"Good-by," he said, and pressed her fingers in his thin, muscular hand. "Good-by," then he bowed his head and touched her lips with his.

In the saddle the soldier rushed back to Loughborough's feelings. In the din of battle, Lou-i-sy seemed an episode, a dream rather than a reality; but to Lou-i-sy, Loughborough was the transcendent reality of life, that which brought the blood in sweeps

to brow and cheek, or made her turn faint and white as she waited, watched, listened for tidings from the field of battle.

CHAPTER VII.

In August, Diana went on a visit to the Fawny-stawks. Loughborough, at Lou-i-sy's request, drove Miss Fontaine thither in his buggy. The road twisted in white loops through as winsome a country as ever God set His touch upon. Surely the Creator was in a playful mood when He moulded those slopes and set to dimpling those vales which make the frame-work of many a farmstead inhabited by the thrifty Hessian or by the gentler-bred Virginian. The hills whistled forth their joy in sibilant grasses, or sent it skyward by means of whispering leaves; the creeks lay in their beds, the sheet of water over them, and piped their gladness, through reeds, in rounds and runs and quavers. The Blue Ridge stood against the horizon in a sharpness of color, like mineral paints. It was the blue of Dresden china.

The country around Cloverdale laughed more than that about the Valley Farm. The soil here was lovable and it was beloved. The farm-house was like many that you see in the Valley,—square, of mellow red brick, with green outside shutters, and a portico, white and vine-shaded, in front. A public-road swept past the front gate, so that you could say "Good-morning!" to the neighbors as they went back and forth betwixt

Winchester on the south and Brandy Hill on the north side of Cloverdale. Wheat-fields and pasture-lands, like squares in a quilt, made alternate blockings of green and gold. A gentle swell of hill-side at the back of the house took the eye with its regular boss-work of grape-vines, planted in rows and trained upon stakes like those of the Rheingau; while the neighboring hollow showed the tuft-like tree-tops of the apple orchard. A herd of cows wound in through the farm-yard gate as Loughborough's buggy stopped in front of the house. Diana's nostrils distended to take in the delicious blending of midsummer scents, as she cried out, "What incense! It is a poem of Herrick or of Marlow expressed in smell."

Miss Fawnystawk came quickly down the walk, which was merely a break in the grassy rectangle upon which the house stood, and Loughborough sprang out of the buggy to greet her. Beside his ruggedness, how gentle, how feminine she looked. She was in the blossoming prime; but her twenty-seven years had diminished none of the cream and roses of a complexion which seemed to be taking hints from the flower-beds. It was this wholesomeness of tint which made the old ladies of the neighborhood say, "Lou-i-sy's skin, it looks good enough to eat." Her eyes, with a violet warmth of hue in them, were a little blank, perhaps, but they had the power of looking kindly; her light hair was coiled in the back, a plait having been reserved for the coronal that stood high upon her head, adding length to the face, which otherwise might have been criticised as a trifle dumpy. The over-rondure of her figure gave a hint that the peace

and plenty which surrounded her might, one day, stow away another chin under the already rounded one, and place a too heavy padding of flesh about her joints. Just now, however, much riding on horseback, much standing on her feet, much presiding over hog-killings, apple-butter boilings, harvesting, wine-making, and dairy-tending, kept the abundanee of flesh within the restraints of a compact figure, set off, this evening, by a gown of blue homespun, ornamented with devices in crimson braid of the lady's own dyeing.

An instant only is needed for the quick-eyed woman to take in details of color and contour, and Diana, bred upon art-galleries, had this facility and the habit of suiting symbol to sentiment. Her imagination decided in favor of Miss Fawnystawk before she was out of the buggy.

"Dear heart, you must be tired," said Miss Fawnystawk, and she greeted her visitor with a cordial kiss. "Come in; you'll have a bit of time for resting before supper-time."

Loughborough drove off with the buggy to the barnyard, and the two ladies stepped into the pathway that led to the house. Miss Fawnystawk was not able to pass the garden-gate, however, without looking in, for the garden was her pride: it was a couple of acres separated by a paling from the grass-plots of the house-place. She chatted pleasantly about her luck with cam-e-lias, chiny-asters, and dale-ias; stooped to pluck a sprig from the border of citronalis, which she spelled, in her mind, citron-Alice.

She might well be proud of her garden, for it was a rich mass of flowers intermingled with vegetables,

all living together in joyous profusion. The pea-vines made a pretty lattice, through which you might spy huge melons tumbled about on the patch, waiting for somebody to gather and eat them. A group of rose-trees, in unrestrained, hoydendish bloom, tossed themselves against a belt of beautiful feathery asparagus, recognizing that the lace-like foliage made a becoming veil for their vivid complexions. The grapes that climbed the espalier in the centre of the garden were beginning to exchange the sallow green of unripeness for the glow of maturity. There were no angles in the landscape; Round Hill, facing Cloverdale to the west, the most ambitious mountain hereabouts, showed on an enlarged pattern Miss Fawnystawk's own contour. The apple-trees in the orchard, on the other side of the paling, touched each other with their branches, like burgomasters' wives hoop-skirted for a pageant and jostling one another in the crowd.

"This is my room. Come in and take your things off," proposed Miss Fawnystawk, introducing her guest into a large square bedroom on the right of the double hall as you entered from the front porch; for in the Virginia mansion, whether it be in the Valley, the Piedmont, or the Tidewater, "the madam's chaahmber" is always on the first floor.

Diana, left to herself, sat down to rest a few minutes. This, then, was the abode of Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk, Loughborough's betrothed.

The house showed the order of some middle-age priory. Miss Fawnystawk represented another class differentiation than that to which Vanessa Spangler belonged. They were both of Hessian descent, but

the Fawnystawks were of a better neighborhood, as well as of better stock. Lou-i-sy had kept house for her father since the age of thirteen, at which time her mother fell a victim to paralysis. A life of outward activity had calmed her spirit and deepened her nature; yet she must have been born serene, to have diffused about her that light of peace in which her friends basked. Her accomplishments were of the useful sort. She could tell every part of a hog, and what it was good for; she could direct a man how to cut up a beef. It took time for Lou-i-sy to get an idea; but with her a thing once learned could never be unlearned. She was not without accomplishments of the ornamental sort, having received a year's schooling at a girls' seminary in Winchester; but the studies pursued there had puzzled rather than enlightened her. What would the *ologies*, strongly diluted by the ignorance of a provincial teacher, do for a country-girl whose mind had previously been occupied with hams and pumpkin-pies instead of text-books? But she took wonderfully to the lessons given in wax-work, feather jewelry, leather-flower making, and the pettifoggeries of art. She also took lessons in music, and could do a little tinkling on a piano which her father had indulged her in after a very flush wheat-crop. But the catalogue of Miss Fawnystawk's accomplishments are hardly worth a clause, though to her simple mind they meant much.

Diana took off her hat, as she was bidden to do, and then sallied forth into the hall. The parlor-door stood wide open; she hesitated for an instant on its threshold. Like the other rooms of the farm-house, it was a large square, lighted by four windows. A faint odor of

desuetude tickled the young lady's sensitive nostrils as she paused to read Lou-i-sy's traditions illustrated by the best room of Cloverdale.

The chairs were a little too well upholstered, and they stood about stiffly, oppressed by the restraint of company manners. A horse-hair sofa, sleek and black, between the two west windows, tried hard to assume an air of careless ease; but failed utterly, in spite of the flossy yellow rug in front, and the tidy pinned upon its back, like the chemisette on a lady's bosom. A table standing upon the central figure of the sober-patterned carpet was covered with shells from the Pacific coast. How they got washed up to the eminence of Apple-Pie Ridge, it would be hard to say; but certain it is, that Miss Fawnystawk dusted these brightly-colored conchs, without omitting a day (if we except that year at school), since the age of thirteen. Some of the fruits of this lady's own handiwork were scattered about. There was a bracket over the mantel-piece decorated with leather grapes; there were roses in wax under glass, as painfully regular in their perfection as a set of artificial teeth; there was a plate of strawberries, cherries, and peaches, also in wax; but they kept themselves carefully in the darkest corner of the room, as if they knew that at this season they could ill stand the challenge of bed and orchard without. The whole was surveyed from the wall by a procession of Confederate generals, photographed and framed in carved walnut,—Breckenridge, Beauregard, Jackson, Lee. How dwarfed by the miserable art which, instead of elevating, belittles! What a mimicry of worth! To Lou-i-sy's eyes, however, they were

the Southern chiefs, and that was enough. Had not their names been momently upon her lips during those thrilling years of the war which had brought her a lover; soon, now, to become a husband?

The looking-glass, which hung over the mantel, imaged Loughborough coming up behind her, and Diana, after a moment's pause, cried, "Ah, a piano!" and shot into the room. She laid her cheek, in the ecstasy of her enthusiasm, against the maroon flannel cloth which guarded its precious veneered surface. "After a separation of months, Dr. Loughborough, one can be pardoned for being silly."

"Play something," he said, and raised the lid. Diana sat down and ran the scale. Her finger-tips saluted each key; she smiled delight.

"Not bad. What will you have? Something sad or gay or ——?" Her question ended in a little burst of melody from the key-board, after which, "Do you like Chopin? Ah, I think his mazurkas the essence of the romantic mood."

Her words melted into a mazurka, snatched from the instrument in a whirl of chords, half weird, half sweet.

"Do you like Schumann? He is dreamy, not impassioned. I prefer the two together. You know one must have courage to confess to being sentimental. I am sentimental. Listen! Isn't this delicious? Schumann's 'Nouvelle,' two voices. This is the man's; by and by you will hear the woman's. It chimes in like —like—here it is; listen."

Diana's running commentary upon that most charming of dialogues in music ceased, that she might surrender

herself to the inspiration of Weber. Her rapid changes from one composer to another revealed the girl in her; but her music was no mere girl's music. If it lacked experience and maturity, it still had another quality, which puzzled Loughborough as he leaned his elbow on the instrument and rested his chin in his hand. She transported while she played: the music was a succession of waves from the great sea of Harmony, in which she seemed not so much to swim as to float. While playing, Diana touched the invisible.

"Sometimes I say that music is my art." Her hands idled with stray chords. "Then I remember that I do not care for the best. Beethoven is a sealed book as yet. Then I want to adopt sculpture or painting as my vocation. Painting is poetic; sculpture, heroic. Is it not bad, Dr. Loughborough, not to know what you want to do with yourself; not to know what you are worth in the world?" She let her hands slide heavily into her lap.

"Feeling comes first, knowing afterward," was Loughborough's answer. "You cannot reverse the rule, Miss Fontaine. Chopin has feminine qualities; he is the woman's artist. When you get above the sex-line, you will rise to Beethoven."

In his heart of hearts Loughborough would not have had the young girl transcend the sex-line for a good deal. She was infinitely more charming as she was. He was a progressive fellow, for his time; but he did not wish to see woman wholly emancipated. He took up a flute which lay on the piano and touched its stops.

"Do you play?" cried Diana.

"Not as you do. I came to the conclusion, some time ago, that a man who attacks his work with the fury of the wild beast is in danger of becoming a one-idea-ed monster. Such a man is a detestable Cyclops. I am fond of music. I took up the flute to keep myself from becoming a utilitarian: its home is here by Miss Fawnystawk's request, but it goes with me on many a long tramp. It is a part of my professional advice that every man should have some absorbing pursuit, and one other."

Diana's eyes dilated with interest. "Let us play together," she cried; "I will accompany you by ear." But Lou-i-sy came in now to tell them that tea was ready. At the tea-table Diana met the other members of the family whom she had not yet seen. There were only two others, Dr. Fawnystawk and Cousin 'Becca.

The doctor had been toasted by nature to a crisp, but his shrewd little eyes travelled over the young stranger with pleasurable attention. He thought her arms capable of doing a good day's work, if she had a mind to. Cousin 'Becca Fawnystawk was a fine figure of a woman, past sixty, who played the part of pedagogue in the "Burnt School-house" on the far edge of Brandy Hill. This lady had gone over the Ridge to pay a visit about the time when she and the century were in their teens, and she came back after a year or so with a newly imported pronunciation, very strange to the Hessian ear. It was all very well in eastern Virginia to do as the eastern Virginians did, but to come back to the Valley, "making her a's as broad as a furriner's," appeared to these good folks an unpar-

donable eccentricity. Conceive of your own flesh and blood thaahnking you for the butter, shaking hahnds with you, and showing you fahncy stitches. Such exaggerations as these had sorely tried Miss 'Becca Fawnystawk's relations for many years. Her voice, too, was in grotesque contrast to her size,—it was the body of a grenadier with the heart of a mouse. She had a dainty way of clipping her syllables, calling her friend Miss Fontaine, the elder, Ma' Jane, and Miss Jackson, Sa' Jane. She was one of the women who pity themselves; her conversation ran into tales of heart-rending woe concerning herself; but to the woes of others she turned an ear of marble.

Miss Fawnystawk's tea-table was more ambitious in the way of elegance than Miss Sarah Jane Jackson's. Its wood-work was mahogany polished with "elbow-grease," as Dr. Fawnystawk said. The white mats strewed about its shining surface gave the effect of snow on dark-brown soil, and there was no crowding of dishes. What a pretty meal is a farm-house supper, coming, as it does, at "early candle-lighting," to crown the day's activity.

While conversation was going forward, Lou-i-sy, toward the end of the meal, arose from her seat, and, with the carving-knife, sliced, longitudinally, the huge watermelons that could hardly stay quiet, for rolling, on the side-table. The click of ripe meat under the pressure of the carving-knife gave forth a pleasant sound, an announcement soon to be realized by the delicate straw tints and luscious pulp of the halves as they burst apart from each other. A half-melon, with a spoon, was set before each guest, and Lou-i-sy beamed

her affectionate glances upon melon and melon-eater, as if she rejoiced to see good things eaten by good folks. Hers was not the hospitality that opens the door and shuts the countenance.

At Diana's exclamation over the beauty of buff-colored melons and tomatoes, she returned with more vivacity than was her wont, "It is queer how keen the stuff is to grow in our garden; the beds 'll do anything you ask them to. We've black and white currants in the season as well as red; we've white mulberries as well as black. Some folks prefer the low-colored fruits and say there's a finer flavor to them; but give me the red when it comes to preserving."

"Lou-i-sy's *that* keen after preserving, she'd preserve the fingers off her hands ef she wuzn't afraid she'd stick to something as is dirty."

Dr. Fawnystawk enjoyed the laugh at his daughter's expense; yet he was proud of her thrift, asserting that she took after him in this, and that "a wild goose never lays a tame egg."

"Before and after supper-talk differs," was his daughter's shrewd retort. "Who'd be the first to grumble, I'd like to know, if there weren't three kinds of butters on the table of an evening: the doctor here knows which of us has the sweet tooth in this family." A blue beam was shed upon him by Loughborough's betrothed.

"An ox should not be on the jury at a goose's trial," was Loughborough's rather downright answer to the blue-eyed appeal. "Your father and I are not of the same way of thinking, Miss Lou-i-sy; he's for feasting, and I'm for fasting. That a man has two ears,

and two eyes, and one mouth is proof to me that he was intended by his Maker to do less of eating than of aught else; especially when you reflect that the mouth has the double duty to perform of speaking as well as of eating.

After a suitable amount of pooh-poohing of this from Dr. Fawnystawk, they all, with the exception of Miss 'Becca, repaired to the porch, flooded now with a moon just risen.

"Music, Dr. Loughborough; your flute, please. You and the honeysuckles must have a duet; the tree-frogs and katydids shall be the chorus."

The flute was brought. Loughborough, standing in the pathway, made of it an obedient servant: it brought forth at his command plantation melodies, Don Pasquale's Summer Night, and a snatch from the Zauberflöte.

Dr. Fawnystawk went to sleep and Lou-i-sy dozed in her rocking-chair. The moon, well above the horizon line, made her its own. A silver chrism was upon the coronal of her fair hair, iridescence upon her face and bosom, while the hands clasped in her lap wore fairy gauntlets of silver.

The same moon which adopted Miss Fawnystawk, mocked at Diana; made love to her through the spray-showers of the honeysuckle that climbed the porch lattice, and then leaped groundward again. It startled you with a glimpse of her eyes charged with responses to the music; then it cheated you of a whole half of her that rested in shadow; her gown was plaited over with the shadow-tracery of vines. It was the very coquetry of moonlight, and Diana herself was half

witch, half illusion. Lou-i-sy was the placid statue of a Saxon Bertha, the moonbeams, flax threads. Diana, all hints and hidden meanings, gave forth no suggestion of industry, but only a delicious wild unrest.

Dr. Fawnystawk, roused from slumber upon his hard bench, denied that he had been asleep, but thought he would go to his chamber. "Early to bed, early to rise," he said; then, "he that will thrive must rise at five; only he that hath thriven may lie till seven."

Lou-i-sy roused, too, and, with a yawn that melted into a moonlit smile, confirmed her father's words with others of the same family, "go to bed with the lamb, and rise with the lark."

"It is too late for the lamb; we will not go to bed like sheep," interrupted Diana. "I want more moonlight, more music, more of this summer night. I have not had half, half enough."

She threw out her arms to embrace that beautiful summer night which was treading the vales and smiling on the Round Hill opposite like a gold-haired, passionate-eyed Juliet. In an instant, her arms, bared by the loose sleeves falling back, were turned to ivory. Loughborough could not help wondering if they would answer warm to the touch. He rebuked his lips for the test which they inclined to make, and turned away that he might not witness their tempting eloquence. How true it is that the mind pervades every inch of the body, and is not caged up within the limit of a brain, as some have thought.

Dr. Fawnystawk's bedroom candle was caught sight of at the vanishing point in the hall. Lou-i-sy now appeared on the threshold of the front door, candle in

hand. Bed was the watchword, and Diana was forced to yield. She must leave that moon to the Round Hill, to the orchards of Cloverdale, to the lanes of the Devil's Hollow, to the road flashing white on the top of Brandy Hill, and betake herself to four walls and a plaster ceiling. Standing on the top porch-step, she bade adieu to the night, half whispering, for her consolation, "Well, we will have the morning, anyway. Night is for lovers, but the morning is for the muses."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE nation that teaches its youth to be proud of their past need never despair of their future. The old *régime*, set in its groove by a simply-bred, gently-mannered agricultural people, did not pass away all at once. Its doom was sounded by the cannon of Manassas and Gettysburg; its death-warrant sealed by veterans' tears at Appomattox, but its life had been too hot to perish on the mere signing of a treaty: though wounded, it lingered on; for reconstruction was a gradual affair. The chivalry which it fostered has been with many a synonyme for fantasticalness and sentimentality.

Here is not a place, however, for defining words; the novel deals with atmospheres, the spirit of an epoch; and, in the days of which we write, chivalry was a word of honor in the South; the literature upon which its youth had been fed,—Scott, his prose and verse. The Scottish Homer gave to them (the

Southrons) the names of their estates, as well as models for both men and maidens,—Kenilworths, Woodstocks, Melroses, Monkbarns, Newsteads threw the glamour of romance upon the landscape. In every gentleman's library the Waverley novels stood first and foremost; on every gentlewoman's tongue sprang couplets from Marmion, The Lady of the Lake, or the Lay. Old men quoted them in Congress or in the legislature; young men rode to the tournament under such titles as Knight of Ivanhoe, of Red-Gauntlet, of Waverley. Indeed, many a Virginian's knowledge of literature was bounded by the covers of his Scott, and he might have done worse; nay, he does worse who, in this day of rampant journalism, limits his literature to the coarse pages of a *Herald*.

Throughout the Valley and Piedmont, Virginia, there existed at this time a picturesque and local sport called "The Tournament." The display of horsemanship on these occasions was superb. Here was a training-school which turned out finer cavalry-officers than West Point. It was the fable of the Centaur come true in our own century; and it must be remembered that this sport was unique, for we have never heard of the tournament in any other part of the world since mediæval times. Truth and horseback-riding was the motto of the Persian, and it made him a conqueror; it was the motto of Scott, that Homer of knighthood; and it was the watchword of the young Virginia of this century.

Diana's bosom was foolishly tender to chivalry, but her brain was confused about the definition of the word,—one which has played the knave's part in many

a would-be wise man's philosophy. Her mind was a museum of requisites; to wit, a pair of cavalry-boots and riding gauntlets, a plumed hat, a daring arm, a charming smile, a bent knee to a lady's foot, a murmured compliment in her ear; and it is to be feared she would not have recognized the knight without these marks. To her eye, McElroy fulfilled the requirements of chivalry: he had the boots and gauntlets, the plumed hat, the charming smile, the daring arm, the bent knee,—all; and yet what lacked? Something, even she was aware of that. Had Loughborough been asked for a definition, he would have said, "The knight is he whose heart warms to his dog, his menial, his general, his beloved." The horse may have made of man a gentleman; but the Persian was right when he added Truth as another and the chief source of manly honor. McElroy was but a sham knight, with a foot ready to trample upon his mother's bosom, if need were to achieve his desires. His was a weakly, affectional nature, loving to grovel in the slush of sentimentality, and finding these moral mud-baths soul-soothing; while under his graceful garrulity there was a shocking lack of reason. Diana had heard Southern chivalry much sneered at by her Newport friends. "The name is a cloak," said they, "which the wealthy slave-owner throws over his own licentious passions."

"Oh, there is a tendency, of course, for some virtues to become antiquated," said a Harvard graduate whom Diana had once found interesting. "Chivalry is one of these, I do assure you, Miss Fontaine." "Then ours is the loss." Diana had spoken up quickly, cling-

ing to romance. "Upon honor, Miss Fontaine," adjured the collegian, "don't you know that chivalry was an institution which kept your sex a thousand years behind the age?" You should have seen Diana roll her eyes, curl her lips, and bridle at the implication; but she did it becomingly, so the young light of Harvard deigned to shine upon the scornful girl, just as the great luminary shines upon the unjust as well as the just. No, she was at the height of the age of romanticism; she teemed with its virtues and its follies.

One Sunday afternoon, sitting on the Fawnystawk's piazza, she heard with delight the following announcement made by Loughborough:

"There is to be a tournament at Ribbell's Spring this week. It was planned this morning at the Burnt Chapel. The boys from Apple-Pie Ridge will ride, and some of the fellows from Clarke and Winchester. It will be the first tournament since the war; but the men are in training, and you will have a chance to see some good riding, Miss Fontaine."

"A tournament? Charming. I am wild to see you ride, Captain McElroy. Dr. Loughborough says that when you are mounted, you and the horse are one."

"Don't forget your uncle," said Lou-i-sy.

"Yes, it would be hard to beat him," agreed Loughborough. "Grat is a cyclone on hoofs; but you, McElroy, have the truer lance."

"My hand is not as steady as it used to be."

McElroy lifted his plump white hand, that they might see it tremble against the green honeysuckle leaves climbing about the piazza.

"You will ride, too?" asked Lou-i-sy, turning, in swift pride, toward her betrothed.

Loughborough nodded. "Yes, and one of us two must crown Miss Fontaine queen of love and beauty, as this is to be her first tournament."

Lou-i-sy showed pleasure at this proposition. Both McElroy and Loughborough were fine riders. She awarded the palm to the last, and rejoiced in the prospect of his triumph; besides which, she had been crowned several times; why should not Diana have her chance? Miss Fawnystawk was a happy woman; she wished that all others of her sex could be so, too. Diana's countenance at this moment argued no small degree of happiness. A smile winged across it and lit each feature with taper-touch; her whole face swam in light. She was generous with her feelings. Loughborough and McElroy warmed,—a woman's enthusiasm carries inspiration.

"It lies between *us*," cried Loughborough. "Grat will not crown his niece, of course. He must ride, but not in the contest. I think I can fix that all right."

"I must borrow a horse," thought McElroy, and he reviewed the Spangler stock, always at his disposition. He shook his head; there was one horse, and but one, in the Pughtown neighborhood worthy to prop his knightly legs, and that one belonged to Algy Swartz. If Algy should ride; but no. Algy was in love with Miss Spangler. A word from McElroy, and that lady would bespeak the horse for the man she adored. Algy would agree to stay at home or go as spectator. He rode like a Conestoga, anyway. Miss Spangler

would transfer the horse to McElroy, and behold him mounted for conquest. The chain of thought flashed through his brain in a twinkling; if there was one thing on earth that he loved passionately, it was riding. He swung himself into the saddle, spurred his horse's flank, and took the ring on the spot, to the words and tune of the "Cavalier's Glee:"

"Spur on, spur on. We love the bounding
Of barbs that bear us to the fray;
The charge our bugles now are sounding,
And our bold Stuart leads the way."

Diana's heart trotted in time to the glorious song, for it must be remembered that she was made of inflammable stuff. She was in the spirit of the joust when McElroy said,—

"If we are to ride for you, you must dub us knights. How shall we be called?"

And she answered:

"Fair beard and a singer. You must be Sieur Nesle de Blondel?"

Miss Fontaine's eyes dwelt approvingly upon the fair hair and the fair beard, and she strove to echo a line of the "Cavalier's Glee."

"The heralds will never pronounce it. We have never had him for a knight, Miss Fontaine."

"They must be trained."

"We must get a college-fellow, then. I don't want to be murdered by a marshal."

He hummed again, picking to pieces a honeysuckle. He was never so busy as when doing nothing, this indolent, amorous, engaging fellow.

"Come, tighten your girths and slacken your rein;
Come, buckle your blanket and holster again;
Try the click of your trigger and balance your blade,
For he must ride sure who goes riding a raid."

Diana felt, while listening to the raider's song, hummed to the tune of "Bonny Dundee," as if she would give anything on earth to have lived South in war-times. The rebel woman stood suddenly glorified to her imagination. She believed that she was by nature a rebel, but strongly diluted with the æsthetic sense.

"McElroy has Jeb Stuart's trick; he trolls snatches of song in the cannon's mouth. What is to be my name, Miss Fontaine?"

Diana made a show of reflection; then looking up, smilingly, she said,—

"Lion-Heart."

"What! and be surpassed by a singer and a subject? In the saddle, McElroy is king; change the names."

Diana laughed at the word "change," for Loughborough would make but a grotesque Blondel. She shook her head.

"The name suits. Doctors must have the eagle's eye, the lion's heart, and the lady's hand."

Loughborough bowed to the praise implied. Miss Fontaine made such pretty pictures with her words, her conversation was the mosaic of Florence, the subject often classical.

Lou-i-sy interrupted the talk with a tray of juicy summer apples. The ennui of how many a rainy Sabbath has been spiced into pleasure for the rustic Valley

farmer by means of his transcendent apple! How often during the snows of winter has he beguiled the do-nothing seventh day with a pippin, a rambo, or a gorgeous bell-flower. A long, weary look at the clouds, —then an apple; a glance over a stale newspaper,— then another apple; a hand-warming in front of the fire, yawns, and a nap, after which another apple. A neighbor drops in, in spite of mud,—more apples; and so has many a dreary Sabbath been passed over by the unliterary Hessian. It may have been that, in the monotony of Eden, the apple came to Adam and Eve as a relief. It was not so, however, with Lou-i-sy's tray of summer-apples; they came not to relieve, but to crown a conversation that had brightened eyes and sharpened tongues.

The day of the tournament arrived; it was the bridal of earth and heaven, for one seemed to be the lovely complement of the other. The dust might have been criticised, for the cavalcade, winding through the valley tournamentward, kicked up a flying cloud of it. Diana, loping forward on horseback, led the van,— McElroy at one side, Loughborough occasionally at the other. Lou-i-sy followed in the buggy with Cousin 'Becca and the boxes containing the gowns which the two ladies were to wear at the coronation ball. Outriders dashed up at the cross-roads to join the procession. Behind these came the spring-wagon containing the Pursle girls, three full-blown flowers, named in honor of the three States, Georgia, Florida, and Virginia, but called familiarly, Puss, Phode, and Pidge. Diana made the mistake, in an unlucky moment, of calling the last Fudge. They were driven by their

father,—lame Henry Pursle, as he was called,—a hunchback man, wedged in among packages of grotesque shape, containing decorations, no doubt, for his girls to wear at the ball that night.

Diana, riding ahead, with an eye on every bush, admired the golden-rod that yellowed the dark-brown ridges. Loughborough, who happened to be near, dismounted, and brought her a spray. She let it wave like a plume on her breast.

"It is too flashy," objected McElroy; "you should wear nothing but lilies, Miss Fontaine."

Loughborough demurred. "Why cut the acquaintance of all but lilies? This bit of golden-rod reflects every whit it can of God's glory; it deserves praise."

Loughborough was the apostle of hopefulness; he rarely relished abuse. He was sometimes angry, but he never sneered; he thought *that* the devil's characteristic, and said something to this effect, adding,—

"God is everywhere: if every place does not reflect His glory, it is the place's fault, not His."

"Such a place is—hell?" asked Diana, quickly falling into Loughborough's vein.

"Can a man be in hell and yet see heaven near?" murmured a languishing voice in Diana's ear. She looked up and met a pair of deliciously dreamy eyes,—McElroy's.

Loughborough jerked his bridle-rein impatiently, turned the animal's head clear around, and galloped back to the buggy which held his betrothed. The falsetto jarred his moral sensibilities.

"When the thread of a man's life has gotten into a snarl, what shall he do, Miss Fontaine?" pursued the

pleading voice of McElroy, who now placed his hand on the pommel of his companion's saddle, so that they could lope in unison, shoulder to shoulder and flank to flank. Diana was at the age when a woman cannot refrain from giving advice; for within the cloister of her heart the virgin always dreams of becoming some man's patron saint. Alas! the saint is not always wise.

She did not reach her idea through logical processes: "the chill draught of logic would freeze the poor creatures out of life," was a saying of hers; so they sprang from her brain in full stature and full equipment, like Athene from the head of Zeus. Just now she thought of Ariadne holding the clew for Theseus, but dared not speak the thought; it might entail consequences. But to the question, repeated with love-haunting eyes,—

"When the thread of life is in a tangle, Miss Fontaine, what must a fellow do?"

She answered finally, "Cut the knot, if it cannot be untied."

"Where find the shears to cut such knots? Can you imagine a fellow hopelessly caught in a tangle which——"

"Which, if he has made, he can unmake."

McElroy shook his head in the depths of gloom; offers of relief to the fascinating fatalist were unavailing. She pursued:

"The Hero—ideal for all men—cut the reins that bound his chariot and checked its progress, so that he might ride on to conquest."

Conquest! Will not the word thrill any man's soul, even the recreant knight's?

"Conquest! Do you encourage me to seek it?"

"Self-conquest," was the reply, in the midst of a blush.

The spectacle which McElroy enjoyed most was red in a woman's cheek, sprung there at his bidding. He had brought the rose, could he bring the lily, too, without going farther than he dared? He was a queer mingling of passion and prudence. He had often talked love with women, marriage never; for there was a bar-sinister in his quarterings which thrust aside his claim to the fair estate of matrimony unless, unless Miss Spangler would take him, and thank you, bar-sinister and all. But Diana? He looked at her sitting in her saddle, elegant, erect, spirited, longing to try her power; just now in the tender mood,—for love is an instinct. Yet, though this is so, is it not strange that knowledge concerning the right person to be loved is not instinct, too? Is there any question upon earth about which man and woman are more fatally misguided? Diana's eyes sought hedge and ditch; a word, and McElroy might have winged them both to his; for she was in the impressionable stage, imagination more alive than heart. But he refrained. With this girl he dared not name love without its sequel—marriage. He knew that, charming as she was, she was as poor as the beggar-maid, for Ned Fontaine had died penniless, while he was no Cophetua. To his mind marriage was a state of comfort, or it was nothing. While floating in this sea of indecision, he murmured something vague in his tuneful minor key and this chance was gone, for the hotel of Ribbell's Spring loomed up before them over a noble sweep of green turf.

A double line of willows cut off the edge of this park-like expanse, and the two horses, scenting their journey's end, swept up the avenue to the horse-block in the cleanest of lopes. McElroy reached it with Lorena on his lips, and Diana with the softest echoes of it in her heart.

It was the middle of the afternoon when the tournament began. A wall of irregular rocks, breaking into glens fringed with deciduous trees and tasselled with the dark-hued evergreen, looked down upon a grassy circle, whereon field-marshals and heralds were curveting about, on the alert to keep order when the signal should be given. The hotel-piazza, on one side of the lists, was crowded with the gay parasols and afternoon toilettes of summer visitors. Diana's party were ranged upon the opposite side, a dark stripe of buggies, carriages, wagons against the noble line of beech-trees, which behind them caught the sunlight, and then shed it upon the turf a brilliant network. In and out of this network pranced the roan steeds carrying the heralds,—one moment equestrian statues of bronze, ablaze with the splendor of a summer afternoon, the next, young men on capering bay horses, lifting hats first to this lady then to that, catching sight of friends in the variegated throng.

Lou-i-sy sat in her buggy, almost too closely veiled, perhaps by her woman's modesty; but Diana, at her side, was a creature of restless excitement. Her eyes were blazing torchlights in the dark of an agitated countenance. The scene to most was mock-heroic; but to her wholly heroic. She had come to it through contending emotions; the thud of the horses' hoofs

upon the sod of the lists aroused an answering heart-throb.

"Yonder is Miss Spangler—look, Dianny," whispered Miss Fawnystawk, "sitting in the spring-wagon over there with the Pursle girls; and I think in my heart if yonder isn't Miss Sarah Jane Jackson. However did she get all the way here from the Red Lands?"

But Diana had no eyes for either Miss Spangler or Miss Jackson, her eyes being consecrated at present to the feats of horsemen. "Listen! they are beginning," she said, as the penetrating note of a bugle called the people to silence, the hills about them to reverberation. Then a herald, riding forward into the middle of the lists, called the roll of the knights; each name was an epic or a romance in a single word, as the Knight of Ravenswood, of Ivanhoe, of the Lion-Heart, Nesle de Blondel, and a score of others were rung out by the sharp-voiced young herald. After which an address by Judge Lutterworth, one of the summer visitors, from a wooden stand under the lee of the hotel, stating the rules of the tilt; the duties of the contestants; the heroic custom of the tourney in Virginia; the influence of woman; allusions to Scott; quotations from the poetry of valor; ending with the line that has helped so many men to pay the right compliment at the right time, "and store of ladies whose bright eyes rain influence and judge the prize." A speech is a mince-pie that catches everything,—sweets and spice and spirits, as well as more solid meat chopped into bits. Judge Lutterworth's showed a wide and varied reading. He provoked both laugh and cheer; he laid hand on heart, then waved it over his head, and exhibited the practice

gained by after-dinner toast and stump oratory. The politician in him strove to be poet, and the two wrestled; but the politician came off victorious. There was a waving of kerchiefs and clapping of hands from the piazza.

Diana tore off her Roman scarf and waved it superbly. The spring-wagon holding the Pursle girls and Miss Spangler was aburst with giggles. Very differently do people take their joys. The Ribbell's Spring's band played the opening bars of Lorena, Diana's lips moving in unison; the knights trooped away to the edge of the woods which concealed them. The bugle sounded, and the Knight of the Lion-Heart was seen emerging from the tree-boughs at the farther end of the lists, and bounding forward towards the wooden pillars. He bore away the ring upon the end of his lance, six feet in length.

What need to describe a tournament. It is already the spoiled darling of literature. Enough to say that Sieur Nesle de Blondel was the victorious tilter, having tossed the ring seven times on the point of his lance. What horsemanship! Diana half-rose in her carriage. After taking the ring for the seventh time, his horse flew the other half of the circle with its rider, McElroy, along his flank, so that on one side the horse looked riderless. The animal still at the top of his speed, the supple equestrian slipped low along the belly of his steed, then, without changing gait, back again he sprung into his saddle. "Oh's! ah's!" were breathed into the air. There was too much surprise at this succession of feats to allow of clapping at first. McElroy had succeeded in calling the lily to

Miss Fontaine's cheek. She sat pale with her intensity of feeling; her hand clasped upon her heart; the Roman scarf with which she had been idling a few minutes before on the ground beside the buggy-wheel. The next instant recorded the transition of silence into a shout. All eyes were fixed on McElroy. He sat still on his charger, pure black, not a white hair from mane to tail; he himself slim, small-waisted, fair; the hand that held the bridle-rein delicate as a woman's; his plumed hat, black as a Stygian shadow, rested on his loose, longish, light hair. An orange scarf engirdled his loins, the noose being relaxed by exercise. He swept his eye around the enclosure, recovering his breath deliberately, and allowing his horse to do the same. His glance came to a pause upon Diana. She was distant from him a hundred yards, but his eye brightened on the gray riding-habit, the eager throat, the golden rod which gleamed upon her breast. He leaned over his horse, patted him, as if to ascertain that he was good for another run, then, with a touch of the spurs, they started at a pace like the wind; and close to the buggy, without slackening speed, he picked from the ground Miss Fontaine's scarf of rainbow hues, caracoled back in a series of pretty whirls, and gave it into the young lady's hand with as gallant a bend of the head as ever man gave. In Diana's bosom such enthusiasm burned as in Flora McDonald when she made of Prince Charley a hero. McElroy's triumph ended in the whispered words, "You are the queen of love and beauty," drowned by shouts.

A fresh knight rode up in the costume of an Indian chief, painted, feathered, and announced as Hiawatha.

He rode a colt without saddle or bridle, and, uttering a fierce war-cry, passed like a flash along the line, lifted the ring from its rest, continued on at full speed to the verge of the enclosure, where he bounded over the stone wall and disappeared. By the rule of the tourney none but a Christian knight was permitted to lay his crown at the feet of the queen of love and beauty; the Indian, therefore, was no rival, but only a free-lance, a humorous and skilful masquerader. Diana's eyelashes sparkled with moisture; the horsemanship stirred her. McElroy laughed. He thought she looked like a carriage-horse herself, and the simile showed no lack of admiration or respect.

"Do you not recognize that Indian?"

"No; how should I?"

"Try. Is there no answering blood in your veins."

"What! Do you mean my Uncle Grattan?"

"Who but he? They call him the crack rider of the county."

"You?" Diana demurred.

"I? My school of riding was not the Valley, but Eastern Virginia."

"Are they so different?'

"The people are the same, but their traditions are different; very." McElroy was looking straight at Miss Spangler as he said this.

CHAPTER IX.

At the coronation ball the ladies were resplendent, being, as the country-siders expressed it, "on a very heavy dike." Large assemblages, however, rarely show human nature to advantage, for men and women are far better set off by trees and rocks than by each other. The ball-room at Ribbell's Spring, that evening, showed a grotesque mingling of rustics and metropolitans. There were farmers dancing in top-boots and spurs; there were young fellows from the cities, skipping about airily, in patent-leather pumps, to the "Beautiful Blue Danube," played by the band intrenched upon a dais at one end of the hall. In rural districts, religious sensibility is often looked upon as being woman's exclusive property; and in the Pughtown neighborhood most of the men announced themselves as belonging to what they called the "Big Church," with any amount of latitude in its gift; while most of the women were Methodists of the strictest sort, or Hard-shell Baptists of the closest kind, not daring to acknowledge their souls as their own property. For this reason neither Miss Fawnystawk nor Miss Spangler indulged in the frivolities of dancing, though they found great pleasure in looking on at the wickedly rhythmical exercise.

Miss Sarah Jane Jackson was a waif, having been fought over by the Methodists and Hard-shells for a period of twenty years, but not captured by either. That she had never been converted, was the wonder of

her friends, seeing that she had been to so many funerals. Upright she sat now against the wall, her body unyielding as wood, her heart longing for the bewitchments of the dance. She would have liked to melt into the arms of Algy Swartz, who sat beside her, but he, poor swain, was disqualified for this jaunty and charming exercise, not by his conscience, but by his legs, which were unruly as well as unregulated members. Meanwhile her hawk-eye did policeman's duty about the room. She thought it a pity that the pink Mozambique and the black velvet wristlets should be lost, and she with so few opportunities to wear them. She thought they would look well in a quadrille; her feet twitched nervously at a jolly reel tune that burst out from the dais.

"I'll be getting up and be dancing by my lone self, if somebody don't come along and ketch a'holt of me," she said; but the hint was lost on Algy Swartz, who returned a little tartly,—

"Yes, and be taken up for a crazy woman."

The lady angled on, and after a while caught a fish —a bouncer—in the shape of Grat Fontaine, who, in the spirit of an unbridled democracy, found a secret satisfaction in treading a measure with Miss Sarah Jane. He thought to tease Diana. Miss Sarah Jane pressed forward, an angular wrist-bone, encircled with black velvet, lay upon Grat's arm, she treading the floors of a Spanish castle, her head in the clouds was in a tumult of pride and delight.

But not so Miss Spangler; there was a glower in her eyes as they followed Diana flitting hither and thither about the room,—in the maze of a waltz one moment,

the next in the windings of a quadrille. In vain did Algy Swartz consecrate the whole of his woodenness to Miss Spangler on the night of the coronation ball, —a thunder-cloud sat on her brow, and it was a portentous one.

Lou-i-sy, in a corner of the vast room, shed soft beams from her serene countenance on those who approached her. She was in a knot of country ladies, the fairest of them all, her muslin dress brightened by blue ribbons; the coronal of light hair making a framework for the brow, upon which innocence was enthroned. Hers was the ripeness of prime blending with the freshness of the virgin.

"Does she not look divinely good?" asked Loughborough of Diana, handing her to a seat. Diana nodded and smiled; there was reverence in Loughborough's look when it rested on his betrothed.

"She is a Madonna, but of the German school," answered Diana, her head set on one side for criticism. Loughborough was not displeased with the comparison. Man worships in Mary—flower of virgins—the emblem of maidenhood. She is the concept realizing for him the spirit of his mother, his wife, his daughter. Loughborough felt impelled this evening to give more than was his wont of praise to Miss Fawnystawk; perhaps this was a shield to protect his loyalty.

Miss Fontaine was not usually beautiful, but at the coronation ball her loveliness was of that thrilling kind which gives to each man's heart a pang; for he feels that all must be denied—but one. Who will be that one? that happy one who will feel some day the wreath of those beautiful, warm, white arms about his

neck. It was not her features, nor her coloring, but a spirit of enticement which carried her forward, breathed through her limbs, and played upon her countenance like the chase of hues upon an opal. Invitation was on her lips, curled within its smile; challenge in her eyes, which shot forth glances like brilliant arrows from betwixt the double rows of lashes. The lashes; alas, they were the grievance! Miss Fontaine, walking up and down the ball-room with gentlemen hovering about her, was breathed upon by her acquaintance; also by feminine strangers. The ladies from Richmond objected to this bright star that had suddenly risen above the horizon of Ribbell's Spring. When men are in the minority, it is bad to see them monopolized. They should be handed around like cake. On this occasion the ladies served as lemonade, setting off their cake with considerable acid. "*Poseuse,*" said a Baltimore lady slightly passée from behind gold-rimmed glasses; "low-neck; bad taste. She acts as if this were her first outing. Fanciful, too; you can tell that by her eyelashes."

"Fanciful!" rejoined a dowager near, with several daughters to mate; "fanciful! That is a mere nothing. I have watched women for many years, and I have never yet encountered one with such lashes who could be trusted. Looking from under them; the sidelong glance. Eh? Exactly. Pah! how I abhor an insidious woman. Give me a frank, downright young creature." The speaker put up her fan so as to be shielded from the view of any but her own blue and pink romps,—very downright young creatures they were.

So betwixt double rows of snubbers passed she of the vexatious eyelashes to take her place in the quadrille. Innocently unconscious of the invisible arrows discharged at her, she stood at McElroy's elbow; he was now her partner. Miss Spangler, looking on, showed a tide of dark blood under her sunburned skin. Nothing could have been simpler than Diana's dress of white muslin made with infant waist. At Newport such a costume was considered the height of elegance for young girls. Her hair, hanging down in two long Grecian braids, surmounted with the coronation wreath, and the floating ends of the Roman scarf about her waist, made her look provokingly young. Loughborough mentally pronounced her "winsome;" McElroy, "matchless." A kind of delirious ardor shot through him.

Diana sailed through the quadrille without any special interest until it had whirled round to that figure called "the coquette," danced only, we believe, in country neighborhoods. It is an amusing figure, one which gives privileges to the naïve coquetries of a rustic maiden. Miss Sarah Jane made use of them. She held her dress out on either side with her hands, like a Maypole suddenly converted into a ballet-girl, and chassezed her partner right and left with a vim not often encountered. But Grat was her match, and the two executed a florid *pas-de-deux* as entertaining to themselves as to their fellow-dancers and the on-lookers.

"Good heavens!" said Diana, turning to her blonde Turk, "must I do that too?"

"As much as you will of it," was McElroy's low-breathed answer. "Now is your chance to show pref-

erence. Coquette with them all, Miss Diana, but not with me."

Diana's smile was an answer of softness. It needs but a leap from a saddle to a woman's heart; just now McElroy was a splendid knight to this fascinated girl.

"Ladies to the right!" shouted the musicians, and the ladies, in as many as twenty quadrilles, forming a solid wedge in the ball-room, swept in front of their partners and balanced to the gentlemen standing next. Diana fronted Loughborough. She did not intend to be conspicuous on account of fine ladyism; if she coquetted at all, she would not be outcoquetted by Miss Sarah Jane Jackson or the Pursle girls. "She is not anchored to custom; she floats, as I have seen crafts do,—played upon by her feelings, as they are by the waters," was the thought in Loughborough's mind as he took steps and made, with his great, broad, loosely-jointed figure, an excellent background for Diana's pretty manœuvres.

Virginians of a quarter century back liked to see their women coy, yet spirited; dainty, yet prone to give chase, like the delicate-limbed deer. Diana kept her feet in unison with the music, advancing in a shimmer of coaxing smiles; then, just as Loughborough, taken in by these allurements, stretched forth his hands to take hers and turn her round, lo, and behold! with a head-toss she gave him the neatest little slip imaginable; it was the deer, first decoying, then eluding, the huntsman; the swan floating away from the eagle. So with her flying sash-ends, her arms thrown behind her, the words,—I do not choose to take a dare,—written upon her person, she retreated, and danced

forward to the next gentleman, with the suspicion of a side-long glance in order to see how Loughborough took the cheat. On she went around the circle, varying each feint of capture with some dainty trick or other; and it was amusing to see how disappointment dropped its shadow on the face of each expectant man, as she flashed past him without deigning the hand-clasp. Of course, each one had dreamed of being blessed with a touch of the young thing in the primrose years of life. The primrose is delicious to those who have gone a bit further in the dusty road of experience; but no, to each one she gave the slip, until she reached McElroy.

"One would think you had danced the coquette all your life," he whispered, as they balanced. "Inspiration is your dancing-master." When he held out his hands to turn her, she yielded at once. It was the comedy of surrender. Was not he the victor knight? Did she not wear his crown?

"Gentlemen to the left!" shouted the musicians, and a kicking up of feet immediately shook the dust out of the very planks. What a capering!

In the first years succeeding the war there was abroad in the land a furious thirst for pleasure; men threw themselves into dancing, as they had done into fighting, with ardor. But McElroy was an exception; he was a listless dancer. The gentlemen went on their rounds; Diana kept up her coquetting on tiptoe; and her eyelashes, in conjunction with her toes, probably supplied fresh relays of criticism to the lady lookers-on ranged the length of the walls.

"You shall not give me the go-by this time, you little vixen!" whispered Grat Fontaine, dancing up to

his niece with admiration in his fiery chestnut eyes. He loved a daring woman, despised a squeamish one. Vixen on his lips meant more than angel on most men's. Diana laughed and played with him. He looked like King Hal, and danced royally. Diana was interested in his mincing steps, set off with something amazingly like pigeon-wings; she dreamed of Sir Roger de Coverley; her mind, still upon dancing, was in pursuit of the history of fancy steps. At Newport the men walked through quadrilles. In an absent-minded moment, Grat seized her two arms, with hands whose fingers bit into the tender flesh, and whirled her round, round, round; willed she, nilled she. She was vanquished, and came out of her whirl deprived of breath and in a flame of hot scarlet color.

"That was all you wanted,—a little rouge," laughed Grat close to her ear. "You've got that now. You've got a complexion that would shame a pi-o-ny."

This was rough handling; but Grat Fontaine was famous for his rough handling of women, and he had never been liked the less for it. He belonged to the class labelled "privileged." Diana pointed to red marks on her arms. "Bracelets: you needed them. When women go about with naked arms, it's a sign they expect to be pinched." This was Grat Fontaine's way of making strictures upon Diana's low neck and short sleeves,—a fashion then not introduced into the Valley; for in those days the women had their necks shut up close and their arms covered with a bit of muslin, if with nothing thicker. He knew not which to admire most,—the beautiful nudity in the woman, or the rebellion against custom of the kinswoman.

Poor Grat! feeling always stopped the mouth of thinking with him. Diana ceased to pity her arms, shook her fist at her uncle, half in fun, half in defiance. He grinned, turned on his heel, and left her. Miss Fontaine was in a gentle mood to-night; she wore the cestus, not the bow.

"Let us go to the porch," proposed McElroy. "Grat's a splendid fellow, but a ruffian; not fit for ladies. Did he hurt you?"

"Nothing to speak of. He is the strangest man. Could a woman tame him? I wonder if he will ever marry? I should somehow pity his wife."

"Not the best woman on top of the earth."

"Why?"

McElroy shrugged his shoulders and trifled with his beard. They paused for a moment in front of an embrasured window which framed a rising moon. "How shall I explain, Miss Diana? You have to be a man to understand us."

Diana turned her head and caught sight of Loughborough, seated now at the side of his betrothed. Without appearing to observe, in reality he saw everything that went on about him minutely, especially the movements of Diana. It is strange how much of the world can get into the human eye; with the figure of a provoking girl in the trail of his, Loughborough had gone through the figures of the quadrille. Like needle to the pole, Diana's glance pointed to that rebuking eye. She defied the rebuke, but it made her feel uncomfortable.

"Yes, let us go to the piazza; it is not too cold," she murmured; and Loughborough saw them depart

through the doorway. The air was sharp; they had to walk; Diana drew the broad streamers of her Roman sash about her neck.

"I do not care for dancing," said McElroy, as they walked up and down. "It is only the excuse for a partner."

"Riding is consecrated to you; every other exercise must seem tame."

"It was not tame to-night," was the significant answer; "but in riding, a man is the horse's master; in dancing, the woman's slave."

"Slave!" Diana shot a challenge from her eye. A woman does not mind hearing a man call himself a slave, for she knows that he does not mean it. Love is often a narcotic to a man's intellect, while it is always a stimulant to a woman's.

McElroy, it will be seen, cared to play with love, but did not choose to make it personal,—knights, tourneys, music, moonlight.

Diana's imagination was on fire. She wished that McElroy would say to her that she was the loveliest, dearest creature to him on earth, that he could not live without her. She was ready for the most absurd et cæteras; but if McElroy said this, it was by implication; he was enamored, but he was prudent. How strangely do these qualities coalesce sometimes in the same individual.

"You are not a slave, but a knight; and you have crowned me queen."

Diana thought she would rally him; but her voice breathed the softest little tremolo.

"Did you ever read that ballad by one of our

Southern poets, 'The Tournament?'" was McElroy's question.

Diana had never heard it; would he recite it? He consented.

"There are two knights,—Heart and Brain,"—he said. "I am Heart; you shall guess who is Brain." His elocution was of the florid type; but the florid type is potent with youth; and its excesses are deliciously chastened by moonlight. He began. Diana bent forward, her eyes divided between the sward in front of her, whereon the tourneying knights had pranced that afternoon, and McElroy's slim figure outlined against the pearly atmosphere. The verses are by Lanier, written in camp at the beginning of the war. McElroy's criticisms were always either glorifications or abuse. After glorifying Lanier, he gave, thrillingly, "The Tournament."

Bright shone the lists, blue bent the skies,
And the Knights still hurried amain
To the tournament, under the ladies' eyes,
Where the jousters were Heart and Brain.

Flourished the trumpets; entered Heart,
A youth in crimson and gold:
Flourished again; Brain stood apart,
Steel-armored, dark, and cold.

Heart's palfrey caracoled gayly round,
Heart tralira'd merrily;
But Brain sat still, with never a sound,
So cynical-calm was he.

Heart's helmet crest bore favors three
From his lady's white hand caught;
While Brain wore a plumeless casque; not he
Of favor gave or sought.

The herald blew. Heart shot a glance
To find his lady's eye;
But Brain gazed straight ahead, his lance
To aim more faithfully.

They charged; they struck; both fell, both bled;
Brain rose again, ungloved;
Heart, dying, smiled and faintly said,
"My love to my beloved."

A pause followed the recitation, which Diana broke with the murmured words,—

"Exquisite! The story of the war in a nutshell."

McElroy shook his head.

"I am not regarding it from the national, but from the personal stand-point. It is the tournament of life that I am thinking of, not the manœuvres of warfare, nor the mockery of an afternoon. I am thinking of myself,—my attitude to woman—one woman."

He stood out on a background of sadness. To fathom his trouble, she asked,—

"Are heart and brain always opposed?"

"The moralist would say yes, generally, and that they should not be. But who cares for him? What does he know about love? When it is a question of passion, man plays the *rôle* of Heart, in Lanier's poem; woman, that of Brain; for then she, who is generally tender-hearted, becomes suddenly prudent, practical, keen-sighted."

The stricture upon her sex was veiled in the deepest melancholy of reproach. The subject of love had glided into the conversation so naturally, so spontaneously, that Diana did not think to make it a matter

of inward comment. She was only conscious that McElroy's reproach made her feel guilty, and that she wished to exonerate herself.

"Then you think Brain is——"

"Simply this,—the tilter before whom my lance falls prostrate. Death to me is to her—ungloving."

McElroy's fingers were interlaced; his head drooped, so that he did not perceive his companion's annoyance. Had she not been ready to melt to the music of his speech? Why, then, this hopelessness? Why did he lay traps for glance and smile, if the giver of them were not to be captured? His love, his very triumphs, were but the decorations of despair. Alas! he was trifling with the bar-sinister in his disposition.

He dared not go further than a certain point with Diana Fontaine; for, with all her abandon and romantic softness, she was a sword in sheath. There was not an inch of her person which did not betray mettle. McElroy, standing shoulder to shoulder with her on this particular night, believed, in the confidence of manhood, that all he had to do was to stretch forth his hand in order to gather this peerless rose; but he feared the thorn. Here was where McElroy's cowardice lay; his indulgence to himself was colossal. He feared the man, woman, or child that would not be equally indulgent to him. He had talked of man's being a slave. The truth is, he had no conception of woman except as an enslaved creature,—a bangled, jewelled slave,—scented with attar of rose. It is strange how the Oriental crops out now and then in the descendants of our pioneers.

From the ballroom floated strains of the "Blue

Danube" waltzes, but they could not bridge over the silence which ensued between these two romanticists. Diana *would* not speak. McElroy looked up to find her playing with a little sandal-wood fan, her eyes raised, deliciously, to the stars. He could have begged for her heart on the instant; but, somehow, he dared not. He trembled, flushed, threw out his hands toward her. She did not recede. He clasped her arm, delighted for an instant in its soft flesh. She did not recede. He must speak.

"Give me something that is yours, Diana, that you have touched, to be my talisman through life. That fan! it will be some comfort in my misery."

Misery; still trading upon misery. Diana's own cheek reddened with scorn. She started, and the sandal-wood fan dropped from her hand to the floor, breaking into a dozen pieces.

"The curse is on me," muttered McElroy, in a tragic whisper, as if he had been declaiming Hamlet. Diana might have laughed but for the moonlight. Its madness was upon her. She was unobservant of a face that darkened upon them both from the window, and of two figures that stepped up behind her, until she heard a voice which said,—

"Diana, the air is turned shrewd. Take this shawl, or come in, won't you; you'll get your death, 'deed you will."

It was Lou-i-sy, leaning on Loughborough's arm. Both looked gravely at the girl, standing bare-armed in the sharp and chilly mountain air, the fringed ends of her Roman scarf huddled about throat and shoulders. The spell broke suddenly, as it were a cord

snapped, and Diana knew it by a little thrill in her bosom.

"I will go in," she said; "it *is* late."

"Nigh on to one. Not so long, these nights, before sun-up," was Lou-i-sy's answer, as she touched with a caress the girl's hands, pleased to find in her the disposition to retire.

Diana turned to go, then stopped, looked back. McElroy stood motionless,—a piece of sculpture. The heavenly Diana wrapped him in her mantle of mystery and romance. He stood before her the hero of grief; but the quick glance from the earthly Diana broke over him, tossing aside the mantle of mystery and penetrating to the pseudo-heroic behind it.

With swift insight, she suddenly saw him in the category of men who, sleek and comfortable, are forever pitying themselves; who are cruel through their want of strength, as ice is through its want of heat. There is no cruelty like that of negation. How knowledge comes in flashes! The hoof to Cuvier meant an animal; the note of a bull-frog, the chirp of a cricket, to a musician, means a diapason. The face in a crowd, to a poet, means a tragedy, a comedy; a suggestion lays the corner-stone of a whole experience; but to youth, knowledge is but a superior instinct, or, at best, a sporadic gleam, which departs as suddenly as it came. It is wrapped in impulse which brings its own reaction. Therefore to the chill of this disappointment succeeded the hot gush of sympathy when Diana was in her bedroom. "Think how he has suffered, and how full of feeling he is," she whispered to herself, contradictorily, as, getting into bed, she drew

the coverlet over her. Sympathy, however, did not prevent sleep; it only colored her dreams. She thought she was holding out her hand to help McElroy mount to her window, he said; to the stars, she said. She thought he ascended the fairy-ladder to the tune of "Lorina;" but, nay, it was not he ascending a ladder. Yet there was certainly the sound of "Lorina." She opened her eyes wide and looked around. She had been asleep. She looked again and listened. Her cell of a room was no longer flooded with moonlight; it lay in shadow; while from underneath the window there arose on the night-air a stream of melody. Flute and violin accompanied baritone and tenor. That tenor, full of velvet notes; she knew it well. It said to her, "When I am near, love, I set the key of your slumbers; while you sleep, I wait and watch, not far." Such words a young girl reads betwixt the lines of the serenade. Intoxication was still upon her. Diana could not stay quiet in her bed, but bounded up, threw over her the skirt of her habit, and muffled her body in the shawl Lou-i-sy had given her. Kneeling on the floor, she touched the window-sill with her chin, screening herself with the curtain, and looked down upon the serenaders. Loughborough had his flute; Jim Pursle, his violin; Grat Fontaine supplied the baritone; and McElroy, standing apart from the others, so that he was directly in front of Miss Fontaine's window, poured forth his tenor for her ear, she knew, and for hers alone. The other inhabitants of Ribbell's Spring might snore themselves to death, for all that he cared, provided that one pair of ears was awake and listening. The moon had set, but the sky was under the gentler,

subtler influence of stars. There was no vibration of Diana's window-curtain lost upon the troubadour, who, with one end of his Spanish cape thrown over his shoulder, held in his hands a banjo, which he barely touched, surrendering himself altogether to his own voice.

The luxury of his life was to woo a woman whom his destiny made it impossible to win; the fault being his, not hers. He was forever talking about his evil star; you would have thought he farmed out an entire constellation. It was the time when, in the Byronic spirit, men talked of "The star of my destiny has set," et cætera.

Such a spirit was pooh-poohed by Loughborough, who was wont to say, "Fatalism! Nonsense! There is no fatalism but silliness." Diana, half glimpsing at defects of character in the fascinating McElroy, forgot them utterly when under the spell of his voice. Recall the most beguiling tenor you ever heard, and you have his. After "Lorina" they sang "Kill dat 'Possum," a round in minor chords; then "Beautiful Isle of the Sea," and "Ever of Thee I'm fondly Dreaming;" after which the other three sat down on the grass, and McElroy, with another toss of his Spanish cape and a prelude upon his banjo, gave as a solo,—

> "Twinkling stars are shining, love,
> Shining on you and me."

McElroy's gaze throughout the song was fixed upon the window-curtain above him. Well he knew that an arrowy young figure was behind it, palpitating warmly to the music of romance.

After the serenaders had departed, Diana still lingered at the window; the stars seemed to have caught up the insinuating measure; they sparkled to ear as well as eye; but there was not much time for reverie. Her soft thoughts were sent into a mad whirl by one long, hideous shriek that cut the air, that set the corridor into confused mutterings. There was a bustling to and fro in front of her room, then a retreat. Diana opened the door and went out hastily. Several other doors shut as she stepped into the hall, lighted by an ill-smelling, smoking oil-lamp. The people had scattered. Horrified by the memory of that shriek, she could not make up her mind to re-enter her room without first discovering its cause. She tapped at Lou-i-sy's door. No answer. She looked in: Miss Fawnystawk was not there. "Good heavens!" cried Diana, aloud. "What horrible thing can have happened?" Her imagination disturbed, she walked up and down the hall. Through the transom at one end she discovered light and heard voices. It was Number 10. She did not know who occupied Number 10. She walked back and stood in her door-way, anxiously waiting. The horrors of suspense! She must at least know what had happened. Was it to one of her friends? The door of Number 10 opened at last. A tall, uncouth figure walked in her direction; it was a man with a night-lamp in his hand. Diana flew to meet him.

"Dr. Loughborough," she cried, recognizing him; "what comfort in the sight of you! Tell me what has happened. That horrible shriek. Lou-i-sy?"

"Not Lou-i-sy," answered Loughborough, looking down regretfully at the girl.

"Some one else is ill?"

"A sudden attack of hysteria," was his answer, given with the professional air which he did not habitually assume.

"Who?"

Diana put the question briefly. She was interested, but no longer excited; for Loughborough's presence, in spite of gravity, reassured. His full, intelligent gray eye, so warm in hue, made every one its friend. It was one of those wide-seeing eyes that quietly observes everything, to the minutest object, nothing being unworthy of its glance. He was quicker of sight than of speech.

"Is it any one I know, who is ill?"

"Yes, Miss Fontaine. You count Miss Spangler among your acquaintance?"

"Miss Spangler! She? Let me go to help nurse her."

Diana was already moving in the direction of Number 10, but Loughborough laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"No need, Miss Fontaine. Lou-i-sy stays with her till sunrise, then Miss Sarah Jane."

"But let me help Lou-i-sy."

Diana was again on the move. This time Loughborough's touch on her shoulder contained the essence of authority.

"Impossible, Miss Fontaine. I have left orders that Miss Spangler must not be excited. I have given her a powerful opiate. It will probably quiet, though not make her sleep, I fear."

"But I will not excite. I like to nurse, and Lou-

i-sy must be tired," Diana persisted, because she hated passivity; to lie down quietly in her bed with tragedy near was not to her taste; it is but a few steps from the romantic to the tragic.

"Yes; but you will excite, Miss Fontaine, however innocent your intentions; the sight of you would make Vanessa Spangler raving mad."

"Of me?"

Diana stood wide-eyed, her brows anxiously drawn; there was something pitiful in her little dainty chin lifted eagerly to Loughborough's face. He could hardly help smiling.

"Poor child," he said, looking down upon her with infinite kindness, "you are not to blame for other people's faults; but," he flushed a little, "don't you see that Vanessa Spangler is an unfortunate woman, a jealous one, and jealous of you? She must not see you until this paroxysm is over."

"Jealous! Is she so deeply in love as that?"

The high-stepping young lady could hardly associate such picturesque passions as love and jealousy with that sunburned, dumpy little woman.

"Ah, Miss Fontaine, who shall say what the human heart is? None but its Maker. Such natures as this girl's—sullen, without resources, without elasticity—are the ones that run to the morbid. It is the bilious, not the nervous temperament offers the darkest problems to humanity; but there is a streak somewhere in this girl's heredity. However, I hope we may overcome it. Such patients often run into emotional insanity or melancholia."

"How horrible!" Diana sat down on a chair within

her door-way and looked the picture of distress. "What can I do?" she asked.

"Nothing; and you have nothing to blame yourself for, excepting, perhaps, lack of insight. Do not accuse yourself falsely, Miss Fontaine. Go to bed and rest. You are strong and vigorous, but you need rest. I will tell you in the morning how she is; meanwhile, go to your bed and sleep the sleep of the innocent. You have only the ordering of your own mind, not of others. Imprudence, even, is not a sin."

How full of sympathy he was! His voice expressed it when he said, a moment later, "Good-night; all will be well yet, I hope."

His voice rang hope to her ear, and it stayed with her after he was gone. "He warned me about Vanessa that night at Miss Sarah Jane's. How generous not to remind me of that now! After all, I cannot help her having the wrong streak, and I cannot help Captain McElroy's fancying *me*," were the words of consolation she poured into her own ear; but, in spite of this, she woke up, a few hours later, by no means light-hearted.

CHAPTER X.

THE year 1862 saw the Valley of Virginia the theatre of a series of manœuvres which will forever fascinate the scientific mind and thrill the feeling heart. McClellan, with his hundred thousand, held the Peninsula, his eye fixed upon the pinnacle of St. Paul's in the capital; Milroy was on the Staunton

road, with Fremont not forty miles away; Banks at Strasburg; Shields east of the Blue Ridge,—all of them with minds centred upon the Valley. The Valley lost meant the loss of Virginia. "Hold the Valley!" was Jackson's watchword; and he, king of strategists, with Ashby, prince of sabreurs, *did* hold the Valley. How was it done? How did thirteen thousand make headway against five times their number? The world knows that in thirty-five days two hundred and forty-five miles were measured on foot, and four desperate battles won, by these Confederate chieftains. The world knows Jackson's feint of flight and what that flight meant,—the routing of the whole Federal army of northern Virginia, the Confederates on their heels. The world also knows the intrepid charges of Ashby and his wonderful flank movements; also the quick eye of his genius as a scout. With such a partisan, Jackson could overmaster numbers, discipline, and skill. But the world will never know the grief which overswept the troops, depressed Virginia, overwhelmed the Valley, when Ashby—their hero—was killed, in the darkest hour of the war. When his veterans looked upon him dead, "the mother in them rose;" armies sobbed. Two years before his time to go, Jackson, illustrious mourner, stood alone by Ashby's bier and looked at the still face, the stark, manly bosom on which rested that superb coal-black beard which had made him always the significant figure at the front of his column. With what phenomenal power he had cheered his men, waving his sabre and thundering forth these words, "Forward, my brave men, forward!" Of Ashby, Jackson said in an official

report, "As a partisan officer, I never knew his superior; his daring was proverbial, his powers of endurance incredible, his sagacity intuitive in divining the purposes and movements of the enemy." Mothers who had never seen him, wept as if a son had fallen; aged men cried out in anguish, "Would I could have died for him!"

Ashby was the Valley's hero, and with him McElroy had been associated closely during these first years of the war. It is one of life's riddles, that the man who has within him certain elements of greatness should only show them at some one period of his life, never again. McElroy was a captain in one of the companies in Ashby's brigade, and second only to his chief in valor of the daring kind. Had he died then, he, too, might have been accounted a hero; but his power was that of the blood. With laugh in eye and song fluttering the mustache upon his lip, he met the thunders of the enemy's artillery. He could face the misfortunes of war, but not, alas! those of peace. It might be that recklessness was the bulwark of his courage, and fatalism the shield of his heroism; but certain it is, that no man ever shouldered physical danger with more careless joyance; and no man ever fell more limpl into the arms of ordinary temptation than he. Honor was his radiant beloved when she peeped at him from behind the scarlet battle-flag; but when stripped of her military trappings, she was his abandoned mistress.

There were two McElroys,—one on the field, one in the school-house on Pughtown heights. We see the first McElroy at Chancellorsville, with Stuart, in that

charge upon the triple lines of breastworks blue with Federals on that night when Stuart sang out, in the face of Hooker, "Old Joe Hooker, will you come out of the wilderness, come out of the wilderness, come out of the wilderness?"

What a pitched battle! what splendid handling of artillery! what carnage! Jackson dying; Hooker retreating, with his army demoralized and shattered. Alas! the flag still waved on that fair night; but it began to sink; inch by inch did it go down,—Gettysburg, Spottsylvania, and Petersburg; at Appomattox it lay upon the earth. This was McElroy's last battle; here he received a bullet which maimed, though it did not kill him; for a while he was all but a dead man.

War, however, has its idyls; one of McElroy's was in the setting of the Valley Farm, whither he had gone to recruit in the October of 1864. His convalescence was rapid, and he hoped to rejoin his company by Thanksgiving. During this period of convalescence, he was the darling of the Pughtown ladies. His uniform, in tatters, detracted no whit from his heroic mien; and tossing back those loose, light locks of his from a face of poetic softness, he contrived to snatch a delicious little nibble at repose. How the soldiers delighted in the intervals of furlough, breaking in, as these did, upon the dreary dulness of camp life or the delirious excitement of battle! How welcome, too, the furloughed soldiers were with their war-slang, their news of the movements of generals, their messages from the far-away chaparrals of the Wilderness to the mothers and sweethearts tucked away within the mountain-foldings of the Valley. They were ready to abuse

their generals like a pack of lads from school. Even Funk grew eloquent, coming home to nurse a wounded leg, and telling over his pipe how "Old Blue-Light was on the dog-on-est rampage," which meant that General Jackson was about to engage in a pitched battle; or that "Old Jeb tuck a'holt of the Yanks, tooth and nail," which meant that General Stuart had sent the Federals flying; or "Uncle Robert ain't got no use for the Blue-coats," which meant that General Lee was about to come down upon the enemy.

There were songs, rhymes, and jokes to make up the wit of camp-life. "I tell you, Miss Vanessy," said Algy Swartz to his beloved, when it came his time to be home on furlough, "we were all a-settin' round the camp-fire as dreary as could be, not the munchings of a mosquito in our haversacks, when a North Carolina fellow near our camp got his hands on some hardtack. He laid it on his canteen-lid as precious as if it were gold, and then hied him off to get some water. When he came back, lo, and behold, the hardtack were gone. He sat down and kinder locked together his long yellow fingers, hung his head, and sung out, in a mournful kind of a chant, 'Who tuck that cracker from the cracked skillet-lid?' This was taken up by his comrades, and on through the entire regiment. In five minutes a thousand men were singing out in the mournfullest kind of chant, 'Who tuck that cracker from the cracked skillet-lid?' We weren't dreary any more that night. We didn't get anything to eat; but a man can warm his stomach with laughing and singing, if he's a mind to. That wasn't long before the battle of Cold Harbor."

The ladies had their tales to tell,—how they ran the blockade, how they made shoes; one had fashioned a dress out of old silk umbrella-tops, to wear at a wedding. The talk, like most talk, was good for little or nothing, but it enlivened the gatherings, at which they picked lint or made candles. This last occupation was not without interest, and McElroy, his arm in a sling, enjoyed seeing the cord, fifty yards in length, twisted in lard or tallow and coiled into a cylinder.

War equalizes; barriers, like adamantine walls in time of peace, are thrust down by war's rude hand. McElroy, with his handsome face, his soldier's arm, his rounded a's, his straight, delicately-curved nose, used only for smelling and not at all for pronouncing, enchanted the Hessian virgins in the neighborhood of Pughtown. The best-looking and the best off of these was Miss Vanessa Spangler, whose father owned a still-house on the fork of the roads leading to Back-Creek. She often came to the Valley Farm in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the tattered regimentals and the ambrosial beard of McElroy, and she never came empty-handed. She was not above walking in war-times; and the hero of her romance actually found pleasure in the sight of her coming through the sumach bushes on the other side of the brook. In war-times, woman's smile is sweet. Miss Spangler would have given her heart's blood, had it contained balm, to heal this furloughed captain's wounds. Yonder she comes! Her gray homespun gown clouds the space between the sumach bushes; on her head a broad-brimmed hat, which her own hands have plaited out of wheat-straw; on her arm a basket, full of—

what? Something for the convalescent, of course. But what will it be this time? It turns out to be round little pats of cheese-curds, of an infantine whiteness and dimplement, covered with a homespun napkin. McElroy likes curds; his eyes show his gratitude, and Vanessa is rewarded.

They walk around the garden-patch, whereon a few flowers of the sturdier kind give gladness to the eye, because very few have outlived the keen October nights. The great, coarse, fleshy-looking zinnias, of solferino tint, actually look pretty when no other flowers are near. McElroy gathers several, asks Miss Spangler, in the soft dialect of eastern Virginia, to wear them in her bosom for his sake. She turns red like the zinnias, stands speechless, then stretches out her half-hander, darkened by much peeling of apples, to receive the nosegay. It is four weary years since McElroy has seen a woman blush. He cannot refrain from saying, as he surrenders the zinnias, "I wish they were handsomer. Roses are not worthy of *you*, Miss Spangler." Vanessa's cheek grows purple. Roses not worthy of her? She has never heard a speech that pleased her quite so well; but she finds voice to say that "She sets more store by zin-nias than by roses." The captain is good at translating. He knows that a zinnia from his hand is worth a whole bunch of roses to the indulgent eye of Vanessa.

In the October of 1864, some of the Southerners still clung to hope. The "dread winter" had not yet come, when people sat down to naked tables and slept in sheetless beds, every shred of linen or cotton being used for the binding up of wounds. Those black winter

days and black winter nights were not yet come. Hope grew daily paler and paler; the farmers saw weeds grow in fenceless fields, for the plough-horse was pulling cannon; men and women, far and wide, saw the church-bells melted, that musket and rifle might not lack bullets. Such was the condition of the people when October poured its splendor along the hill-slopes and brought around once more that industry of the Valley called apple-butter boiling. During the war, when food was hard to get, this was especially a source of revenue to the farmer,—his orchard was his gold-mine.

The Rheingau has its grapes; the Sicilian vales have their oranges; Italian groves, their olives; but the Valley has its apples. Lips alone, not language, can do justice to them. Such beauties! The bell-flower, tumbled about in yellow profusion, is the peer, the apple that should wear the coronet; its meat, of a delightful brittleness, prints a spicy kiss upon the tongue at eating. Then the rambo packed away in the wagons, in a rosy, jolly crowd, their skins ready to burst with juice at the open sesame of your tooth. What a soft, melting pulp it has, and what an insinuating flavor! So the apples came rolling along in wagons down the slaty turnpike, and the farmer, looking at them, resolved the surest way of turning these pippins into gold; but it was the farmers' wives who were the real alchemists in this work. Delicious work! the theatre for social enjoyment and for courtships. Young and old turned out at the apple-butter boilings; for the fruit, peeled and cut for days beforehand, has to be set in a colossal copper cauldron suspended to a crane and

allowed to simmer for more than twelve hours over a steady fire. Meanwhile the apples must be constantly stirred, lest they stick to the sides of the kettle and burn, which, of course, would spoil a fifty-gallon measure. The stirring, therefore, is the important feature, and this is the guests' duty. Two, a youth and a maiden, are set to stir together, being relieved every fifteen minutes, throughout the night, by two others; and so, turn about, the guests achieve their task,—the matrons, in the dining-room, cutting and paring, the family looking after the supper, which is to come at ten o'clock, as the reward of these labors.

Can you imagine the tidy kitchen, solitary except for the stirrers, warmed into reddish-brown color by the steadily burning logs in the open hearth-place. The shadows in the corners very black; the light about the dresser, with its array of tins, very white; while the home-made coil of candle on the deal table sheds a ring around it of deep orange. Gathered up in the glooms and gleams of these lights stand the stirrers, a youth and a maiden. Both grasp the long handle of the wooden spoon, each fronting the other; so that, in the process of their work, they describe an arc upon the kitchen-floor, keeping at a distance of six feet from the cauldron. When he moves forward, she moves backward; when he moves backward, she moves forward. No conservatory, no curtained drawing-room, no moonlit piazza, ever offered such ravishing chances for a *tête-à-tête.* While the apples are gently sputtering forth suggestive kisses in the pot, and the cider in which they are bathed sends forth its witcheries, the pair can look each other in the eyes,—nay, must look

each other in the eyes,—as they keep their beat,—forward, backward; backward, forward. What reflector more favorable to the revealing of love than the polished tins which stand against the dresser like shields! Then, in the revolution towards the deal table, the home-made candle keeps the young man in shadow, also the upper half of the girl's face; her lips, throat, and bosom are overlaid with yellow light. This time it is the more personal half that speaks to him; the next time, when eyes and brow are brightened by those shining pewter dishes, it will be the spiritual. In this history of change there comes a sudden *coup-de-théâtre.* Bang goes the handle of the spoon against the sides of the copper! In the name of heart-beats and blushes, how did the mischance come about? for the maiden is deft and the youth is skilful; this is by no means their first stirring. But when a young man is looking down into a pair of pleasant eyes that are glancing up into his, full of expectation, does he not naturally let his arm heave the spoon sideways against the pot, knowing, as he does, that, by all the rules of apple-butter boilings, he has the right to snatch a kiss from lips that do, or do not, resist? Sometimes the amorous rustic will allow her lips to be rifled; sometimes she tempts by resistance. He pulls the handle sideways with osculatory intentions; she struggles to check the movement. Two new stirrers entering the kitchen interrupt this frolic, whereupon exeunt the resisting girl, the pursuing youth. When they reach the front door of the house, it is in the midst of shouts from the guests, who understand well enough the conditions of the chase.

The apple-butter cauldron, large enough to have boiled Og's porridge, was borrowed seven times that October, and kept the Pughtown neighborhood in a social stir. It brought up, finally, at the Spitzers', a mile this side of Fessenden's mill, and here was to be the last "boiling" of the season. McElroy went; he wished to try his strength before starting on the morrow to join his regiment. In the dark of desperation which filled this last year of the war, the idyls stand forth in tender, broken half-lights.

Up to this time war had been war; from this time on to the close it was to be slaughter. The Confederacy tottered. The sanguine Southron was fast losing hope, even in Lee. It was the grappling of hounds with the hare; victory was to him who could grip hardest and worry longest. In the earlier years pitched battles had been fought, after which the invader had rested. Rest was now at an end. Worry, harry, hammer, night and day, was Grant's watchword. The Confederates must be fought incessantly; kept eternally in arms; deprived of sleep; starved, starved, starved. It was the theory of the mastiff, and it prevailed. Artillery thundered away the darkness; musketry rattled in the dawn; mortar-shell burst over them at mid-day, veiling heaven's blue in clouds of lurid smoke. Hark to the crash of the sharpshooters inviting battle through rain, sleet, darkness, and sunshine! Death was at the head of the programme, defeat at its bottom. From border-land to border-land groans mounted towards the skies; men were hurled to the earth, fighting sullenly, stolidly, doggedly, until, mouths in the dust, they tasted their own blood.

In the Valley, nicknamed, by the Northern brother, the "Valley of Humiliation," a desperate game was played. Sheridan was at his work of destruction; in his hands whirled the firebrand which set at naught house, barn, mill, stock, fence, forage, ploughs, rakes, bread, life. Starvation was the muttered word which flew from mouth to mouth during that carnival of plunder. Night blushed to the wild red of a northern light. You could see a line of scarlet through seventy miles of heavens, kindled by the beacon-lights of the Yankees, as hay-rick after hay-rick went down, barn after barn, dwelling after dwelling, along those lovely slopes that a few months back laughed along the Valley in their gladness of young orchard and gentle pasture-field. "I have destroyed," said General Sheridan, "two thousand barns filled with wheat, hay, and farming implements; seventy mills filled with flour and wheat. I have driven in front of me four thousand stock. I have killed, and issued as rations to my troops, three thousand sheep."

But this is a tale of peace, not war; and the present page is to record the idyl which, though homely, sheds its taper-light abroad. How mild, when contrasted with the brand of conflagration! The Spitzers' farm-house showed a front of brickwork softened down to the lowest of mezzotints when McElroy entered it, at the hour of candle-lighting, on the night of the apple-butter bee.

The dining-room was already filled with housewives gathered around the table engaged in paring and quartering apples for snits. If this word is new to you, then you have never luxuriated in the most toothsome

dish of a Hessian repast. The apples, when prepared, are strung, and then festooned about the ceiling of the room in which they are to undergo the process of drying, after which they are cooked with corn-dumplings and a piece of fat meat. Of course, description will give you no idea of the luscious mouthful this can make when your appetite has been sharpened upon the whetstone of a November wind, such as is wont to prowl about these elevated ridge-lands; after that raw blast anything cooked is good, we do assure you.

"Lord bless my soul, if there aren't the captain! Take a seat and set down." The speaker, Mrs. Winker, made a show of dislodging her fat sides from the chair into which they were rather tightly packed; but McElroy swept the negative over the group of ladies with his arm. A constant stream of visitors poured in out of the room; but the tide was highest in the dining-room, where some young girls in homespun hovered about; not doing anything in particular, but waiting for the time when they should be called upon to stir. There were also some lads and two or three old men, who kept aloof from the women and discussed in the hall-way the doings of General Early.

The scene was enhanced by several soldiers on furlough, like McElroy, who, plunged in a kind of delicious idleness, watched from eye-corner the manœuvres which the young girls made to attract their attention. Their time was not yet come, for the stirring had not been fully inaugurated as yet.

"Be you really going to leave us to-morrow, capt'n," asked Mrs. Winker, "and you not over-strong yet?"

"Every arm is wanted, madam, as things look now,

—even a lame one," answered McElroy. He had been a sanguine man up to the time of Sheridan's appearance in the Valley, but from that time he turned melancholy, discontented, peevish; and this mood lasted to the end of his life, broken only by an occasional rose-jet of amorous feeling. The shadow was on his face, now, as he added, "He who would catch fish, Mrs. Winker, must not mind getting wet." Mrs. Winker laughed,—a mellow, wadded laugh,—as fat souls will, and capped his saying with the following,—

"Prate is prate, but it's the duck as lays the egg," and she made her fingers fly with the knife over the apples with the swiftness of a weaver's shuttle.

The Hessian mind is astute,—it turns to maxims, never to fancies.

"That's what I say," threw in Mrs. Hefflebower, the mother of two stout boys in the Confederate service. "There's a good shape in the shear's mouth, Captain McElroy, but you've got to cut to find it." The lady tossed the worthless core of an apple into her mouth and crushed it, seeds and all; but she winked a tear from her eyelids. She was hoping against hope. Would her rose-cheeked lads come back, or would they make their beds low down in the swamps of the Chickahominy?

"Well, the Lord knows we've been lucky folks to keep *our* barns up this way," rejoined Mrs. Winker, who had no son. "But I'm good and sorry to see the capt'n settin' off to join his regiment, and he that weak you could knock him over with your little finger. What's Early and what's Lee to do with men of such like, I should wish to know."

"Alas!" the falling cadence in McElroy's voice

stirred the tough chords of the toughest hearts, "what can Lee do, or Early, Mrs. Winker? The army is reduced to starved men; the horses to skeletons; the Yankees are pressing the life out of us, but we must stand by each other to the end."

Mrs. Hefflebower rose abruptly and left the tables to its apples, the wives to their paring. The end? She went to the front porch to choke back the tears which her stout lads called to overflowing eyes. She felt as if she heard their voices sobbing out to her from the lowlands, through the tangles of those Chickahominy marshes, "Good-by, mother. We did our best, but 'twarn't no use."

"Well," said Mrs. Winker, presiding at the table, "they say that the ox when weariest treads the surest. They've lost Ashby and Stuart and Jackson, but we've got Lee; we've got him to hold on to yet."

Even Mrs. Winker's voice broke. McElroy's answer was a long-drawn sigh; he moved away towards the kitchen; the move brought relief to his emotions. How cheery the kitchen looked! a solitary lamp on the table, the great shining copper hanging from the crane over a low but steady flame that played about the logs underneath.

A young girl stood alone in front of it with her hands upon the stirrer. The click of the latch, the keen October air, then the candle's light extinguished by the sudden gust. She turned around, and showed the features of Vanessa Spangler. Irradiated by firelight, her plainnesses were softened almost wholly away.

"How nice and quiet it is here," said McElroy, advancing. "The deuce take that wind for blowing

the flame out! I'll light it again;" but he didn't. If he had, things might have gone differently. Events often shape themselves in the sequence of accident.

"I don't mind," was Miss Spangler's laconic commentary on the light being out. "They're under way, at last," she added, referring to the apples, and looking at them with a shyness not lost upon McElroy, who, in this Hessian kitchen and by the side of this Hessian maid, saw himself as invested with the supremacy of Cæsar in the purple.

"I almost envy those apples," and his voice fell mournfully. "They look gay, simmering away so pleasantly in that sea of cider; their future course marked out,—the padding of dumplings, homes made in a pie; human beings are less happy. Think what my future may be,—ours, Virginia."

"Oh, cap'n, don't talk like that." They walked the beat together in the rhythm of stirring. He sighed; she, tearing her mantle of shyness to tatters, flung it to the winds. "I've been saving the milk so's to have curds for you, and——"

McElroy shook his head. "You've been mighty good to me, Vanessa, indeed you have; an angel; but it isn't any use now. I leave the Valley Farm tomorrow, to join my regiment."

Vanessa, at this news, stood quite still, on the verge of a sob. She struggled, but could not keep it down; it billowed the bosom of her homespun gown. McElroy was not in the least surprised, and not greatly pleased by the demonstration. He strove to soothe with his voice, then, putting his small white hand upon her shoulder and patting it more soothingly, he said,—

"There, there, don't cry, Vanessa. I won't forget you, upon my word I won't."

"Oh, Cap'n McElroy, be you really goin' to leave us in the morning?" was the question, put in a voice that was hardly intelligible for the sobs, and followed by an outburst of hot tears.

In spite of the overcoming nature of her feelings, Miss Spangler was careful not to let go the handle which she still grasped; for if one eye was sentimental, the other was prudent, and to let go the stirrer meant destruction to the Spitzers' butter.

"It's very nice being here, and you so kind. I will miss you, too, Vanessa." He whistled gently his favorite air, trilling delicately on the bar that marked Lorina.

"How will you go, cap'n?"

"By lifts in wagons down the Valley, I suppose. I'd give this stiff arm for a horse at this moment. A horse! a horse! a horse!" interjected McElroy, and he looked eagerly at his companion.

"There's the roan with the white stockings, the only one left 'cept'n pappy's milk-and-cider horse."

The stress of thought had dissipated Miss Spangler's emotions; she was thinking profoundly.

"Your father would not hear to it, Vanessa."

Still, McElroy's face lighted up; the winged Bucephalus galloped across his features. Delight at the prospective horse was obvious. He seemed already to hold the bridle-rein; and if Vanessa Spangler was ever tempted in her life, she was tempted now. She whispered,—

"I could bring him at nightfall to the edge of the woods this side the Valley Farm unbeknown to pappy." She breathed quickly.

"Yes; and I could take the back roads, with Wesley to show the way, clear the Yankee lines, and —oh, Vanessa, with a horse I am my own man again. Lend me your roan; I'll bring him back to you, if I'm not shot worse than this last time, sure as fate."

To be entreated by Captain McElroy! Vanessa Spangler was poised on the glittering pinnacles of triumph. To have resisted would have meant downfall from those delicious heights.

"Cap'n McElroy," said the girl in a firm voice, "I'll bring you the roan to-morrow night after sundown." Feet pressed in at the kitchen-door; a pair of new stirrers had arrived to relieve the captain, who was informed that games were about to begin in the parlor. In the Hessian districts, men are certainly the lords of creation; women being regarded as shrewd and superior beasts of burden.

Miss Spangler kept her word. The roan with the white stockings on, together with a flask of her father's brandy, were given in exchange for a kiss right smack on her thick, pouting, red lips. She never saw the roan again, but she did see McElroy.

CHAPTER XI.

DIANA remained longer at Cloverdale than was at first intended. Dr. Loughborough thought it best that she should be outside the range of Pughtown for awhile, so that Vanessa Spangler should not be excited to fresh paroxysms by a possible meeting. Poor

Vanessa! her wits were incapable of rising to the climax of sarcasm; and she, being unable to pour forth the flood of anger upon another, felt these bitter waves fall back upon her own heart. Hurled into the dark lake of jealousy, she was tasting its acrid waters, and her mind revenged itself upon her own body. Dr. Loughborough saw her frequently, and Dr. Fawnystawk was also called in.

"I think she will come out of it," was Loughborough's verdict. "These affections move in cycles, and the excitement is less dangerous than the melancholy which alternates with it. To reduce the intervals of melancholia is my object. I want to get her away from Pughtown and into a new set of associations; but she will not hear of it, and the old folks will not compel her. You must use your influence next time you ride over, Dr. Fawnystawk."

Dr. Fawnystawk shook his head. His principle was never to take advice; besides which, he was a pessimist, with a vein of the epicurean running through him; so he shook his head as he returned,—

"The 'oomen folks, you can't do nothing with them; they're like the four-footeds. Only look at a horse when he gets his hind legs tangled in the reins or in the shafts; he can't get them out without a-breaking of his ankles. Seems to me, close to home in her daddy's house is the best place for a crazy gal."

"But she has relations in Shenandoah. A visit to them would straighten her, if anything would."

"Well, I'm not so keen to have crazy relatives a-comin' it round me." With which altruistic sentiment the old doctor got himself on to his quietly-

ambling cob, and with well-packed saddle-bags rode off over Brandy Hill on a professional round.

Loughborough had once said that he and Dr. Fawnystawk in consultation would be an ox and a horse harnessed to the same yoke. In the case of Miss Spangler, what Loughborough did one day old Fawnystawk undid the next. The younger man grumbled not a little; but he could not say much against the man very soon now to become his father-in-law. Besides which, he could hardly refrain from a smile over the old gentleman,—such a queer mixture of cupidity and frugality; of thrift and self-indulgence; of ignorance and sagacity; of shrewdness and prejudice. Over the after-dinner pipe there had been tiffs betwixt the two concerning the theory of medicine,—the pet one being about calomel.

Fawnystawk held that disease was a fibrin in the blood; that it must be attacked and dispersed at the risk, even, of decomposing the vital fluid. He therefore did valiant work with calomel, and salivated his patients until they lost color, or until every tooth in their soft, spongy gums wobbled, declaring that *salivation* was the same as *salvation*. Loughborough protested with, "But, my dear sir, let me show you Blank's work on anatomy, or Dash's 'Manual on the Blood.'" In vain. Dr. Fawnystawk sang out the loudest; decried new notions as inventions of the devil or makeshifts to get money, et cætera, et cætera. But Loughborough noticed, as the outcome of these tiffs, that there was a slow but decided renunciation of calomel as maid-of-all-work in the Pharmacopœia.

Dr. Fawnystawk had a patch in his garden dedicated

to opodeldoc, hoar-hound, tansy, elecampane, chamomile-flowers, and a score of other simples; for there was no root nor herb whose virtue he was unacquainted with. Lou-i-sy, a gentle Medea, was set to cull these herbs, and she was not without considerable knowledge of these plants, which she dried or made decoctions of, according to her father's command. Loughborough often called her the better doctor of the two, as she had the sagacity without the stubbornness. Dr. Fawnystawk kept his own store of medicines, but in a primitive way, enough to distract the wits of the modern druggist, who is hand and glove with so many and such deadly poisons. Dr. Fawnystawk's powders were enfolded in small newspaper packages, tied with pink cord and huddled into the table-drawer of a secretary, in a room which he called his "office." None of these packages were labelled, so that when a dose was to be administered, a long operation had to ensue of untying, sniffing at, and tasting the contents of each one. Can you see him, spare and dried, wrinkled as a mummy, spectacles on nose, the nostrils of which were distended with the delicately-sniffing activity? "Fetty," he murmurs, after a pinch twitched from one of these unlabelled packets,—*fetty* being his abbreviation for assafœtida; or "Red oak," tasting another.

Red-oak bark, powdered, was the old-time substitute for quinine, a very youthful drug in the declining years of Dr. Fawnystawk, "Here's your man," he would cry triumphantly, when the right medicament was reached. On a visit to a patient, where he nearly always spent the morning and took dinner if the housewife was in any way notable, some such formulary as

the following was invariably repeated: "Fetch me a quart bowl an' a pint of biling water; none of your lukewarm, ma'am, but well het." This done and the powder thrown in, with the air of an ancient alchemist he would fold his arms and watch the process of solution with mysterious intentness of gaze. Then, with a dilettanteish toss of the nose-tip which gave a perfection of finish to the decoction, he would add, "Cinnymon or allspice, ma'am? Which taste do you choose? Cinnymon? I agree with you. Correct palate, ma'am. All right, now. Dreen off the settlement and drink the fourth of a mugful three times per diem." This rounding off of Latin was as invariable as the quart bowl and the pint of "biling water," all of which went together, and were expected, in a mysterious way, to work wonders in the system of the invalid.

It is recorded that, departing once from a cottage in the Devil's Hollow, the anxious mother followed him to the hitching-block with the question,—

"Did you say take the hull bottle of red-oak bark, doctor, or keep sippin' at it with a spoon all the time?"

"The hull bottle, if you want to kill the brat; the hull bottle, paper, string, and all," was the good doctor's retort, adding *sotto voce*, for his own satisfaction, "The 'oomen folks was made to be the plague of the men folks." Then, his nostrils dilating with angry fumes, "if she kills the chap it 'll be one fool less. You ain't got but one tongue, but you've two ears, and if them as has two ears to hear with can't understand, why, then, it must be the devil's own doing, and no man can undo what *he* have done."

Dr. Fawnystawk believed in the personality of the

devil quite as much as in that of the triune God; and it may be that he feared one a little more than he revered the other. It is also recorded that on a winter's night, many years back, a countryman rode up to the gate of Cloverdale, dismounted, and rapped furiously on the front door. Dr. Fawnystawk popped his head out of the window with the words,—

"Well, what's to pay now? Why ain't you abed, Mr. Whoever-you-are?"

"Why, my wife have took the liniment you give her to rub with, and swallowed it inside, and she's acting mighty queer. How much of that stuff do it take to kill a man?"

"Is it the laudanum mixture?"

"I don't know, but I reckon it be."

"Then, Lord save us, it'll take a few drops to kill a man; but a woman she can take a pint without its hurting of her."

"But what mun I do, Dr. Fawnystawk?" The man was perplexed; his voice trembled with anxiety.

"Hie home, Billy Funk, in the cracking of a whip; bile your wife a pot of coffee; make her drink it black, tell she can set up and say what she tuck laudanum for. It's laudanum and not liniment, man."

Down went Fawnystawk's window, and there was no more to be got out of him; so Funk rode away, and his wife was granted one more reprieve from death. "The folks are so dumb," he would often say, as the excuse for not going to see patients, sometimes, when called upon. "They think they're sick 'cause it's winter-time, and they've nothing else to do; but it's all in their mind. They're as well as I am."

Many a time Lou-i-sy the tender-hearted would entreat him, with tears in her eyes, to go when called. She would bring him his overcoat, mitts, furred collar, and say, "Do go, dear pappy, this time. Think how you'd feel if I was the one as was sick." And Dr. Fawnystawk, snapping his little eyes at her violet, moist ones, would answer, "Well, chile, you are a dewy woman. I'll go to keep from having a shower in-doors, but 't arn't no use," and his departure would be in the midst of mutterings.

Sometimes Lou-i-sy remonstrated with him in behalf of her sex. "All women, pappy, are good for something or for nothing. Which is it?"

"They're good for bossing," the old gentleman would say, with a twinkle of his eye and a clap of his hands on her plump shoulders. "What a good man saith, so say we; but as a good woman saith, so it *must* be. Eh, honey?"

'Lias Fawnystawk was in repute among the Hessian farmers; his arbitrariness impressed them. Besides which, he interfered in nowise with their mode of living, and took small note of hygienics or dietetics,—the gingerbread work of doctoring, he called it. When Loughborough objected to this stricture, the old doctor would round off a grunt with his favorite maxim, "You are a good fellow, son-in-law that is to be, but can't I be your friend without being your fool too?" Then Loughborough kept his mouth shut, for no man likes to be accused of folly.

Loughborough's professional advice to the Spanglers was of the simplest. "Turkey, and not hog-meat, madam," were his words to Mrs. Spangler. "Exercise,

too. Your daughter had better wear out shoes than sheets. Come, Miss Vanessa," he would add, turning to that young lady, who sat the livelong day in a dark corner of the parlor, rocking violently, with no occupation but to munch her own heart and wet her cheeks with great hot tears, that kept them in a perpetual vapor-bath. "Come, Miss Vanessa, dear young lady," taking her hand kindly,—the word "lady" caressed the ear of one accustomed to being classed among the "woman-folks," or to being styled "the gal." "Come, cheer up; don't look as if you had lost your last friend. Why, you've got plenty of them inquiring after you every day, as I jog about on my rounds. I tell them you're looking right well. Don't you want me to tell them that you're feeling better too, next time? Come, I've laid a wager that you'll be at the Cedar-Dam Bush meeting. Don't make me lose; that's a good girl, Vanessa."

Miss Spangler enjoyed her misery too keenly, however, to relinquish it all at once, even had she been able to do so. For the first time in her life she was creating a sensation; and she heard herself gabbled about from morning to night by her mother and the wives of the neighborhood. Still, Loughborough's heartiness was not without its influence; it elicited, sometimes, response. One morning, he entered the dingy little parlor wherein the melancholic maiden sat enthroned, her hair cut short now, her Sunday dress on, enveloped with what she considered the paraphernalia of dignity; with the cunning of the invalid, she had found a way whereby to manage every member of her household. The least opposition to her wishes

produced a paroxysm, to avoid which the young lady was left victor on the field of battle.

"I've come to see you, and I want to look at you," was his salutation, throwing open the shutters with an impatient movement. He was no believer in dark rooms.

Miss Spangler looked up suspiciously, to discover if any of her rights were being invaded. Suspicion is the warp of the ignorant mind.

"The flowers need sunshine; so do young women," was his answer to her questioning glance. He sat down near her on a lumpy, black horse-hair sofa, smiling, not as if he were paying a professional visit.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked, keeping her features well in view.

She shook her head.

"Come, guess: I'll give you a dozen chances."

She shook her head; the soddenness of despondency wavered not on her round, high-colored face. Loughborough tempted her again.

"It's about Algy Swartz."

Miss Spangler's eyes consulted her hands, which lay folded in her lap. The name of Swartz aroused no curiosity. Loughborough tried again.

"He's going to Texas,—on a ranch. What do you think of that?"

Miss Spangler thought nothing of that. Loughborough was sure he saw her eyelids twitch, as if she would have liked to ask a question; but something more potent than Algy Swartz was required to take her off guard. Loughborough drew a book from his pocket and laid it beside those passive hands interfolded on

her lap. She did not ask what the book was, so he volunteered to tell.

"Such an interesting story, Vanessa, about a girl who thought herself deserted by her lover. She almost died of a broken heart."

Loughborough's fine sense perceived tension in the body of his patient. She began to be interested; so he went on.

"The lover is such an interesting fellow, too. I want you to read about him,—a toast among the ladies; handsome, beautiful voice."

"Tenor?" interrupted Vanessa Spangler, in a shrill whisper.

She was off guard now; her eyes, slant, startled, half-shrewd, half-wild, were fixed upon his.

"Yes," answered Loughborough, carelessly. "That is, I believe so; but, upon my word, I've really forgotten. The book tells you all about that, and I want you to read it. But the girl, the poor girl, Miss Vanessa, how she would interest you; she was all but heart-broken, you know."

"Did she die?" Vanessa clutched Loughborough's arm and bent her head to his eagerly, as if life, everything, hung upon the answer.

"Lord bless you, no; nothing like that. She got sick, but she got well; and I didn't reach the end of the story. I think it ended happily, but I'm not sure. Won't you read it, and tell me when I come back? I've got to go to Winchester to-day, and be gone quite a while."

Miss Spangler did not heed the rest; she unfolded her hands from their supineness, opened the volume, and fixed her eyes heavily upon the first page.

"That's it. Good-by, Vanessa." Loughborough shook the girl's hand, and she looked up this time with a pleasant glance of recognition at him.

"I have tried the homœopathic theory, little by little, day by day, week by week. I hope it may succeed."

At the door he encountered Mrs. Spangler. "Interest her, madam, in every other creature but herself, and you have begun her cure."

He spoke to a deaf ear; a blank stare was his response, with the following words in a querulous tone,—

"Vanessy always tuck to her book from a child. That's where the trouble lies, I'm a-thinking, Dr. Loughborough. If she'd let her books be, there wouldn't come such a pressure on to her brain, that's my opinion."

Mrs. Spangler's idea was that books and the mind were inventions of the devil, and that, like Eve's apple, they were best let alone; she believed in the instincts, but feared the very word reason.

"Oh! this religion of the body," was Loughborough's relief, in words, as he sat on Lou-i-sy's porch that afternoon. "Why do people cling to disease? If they held on to virtue or to health with such terrible tenacity, we should see a race of heroes and demigods. Look at Miss Mary Jane Fontaine,—begging Miss Diana's pardon,—with her, diseases are angels in disguise,—God's own ministers. Look at Miss Sarah Jane Jackson, a sensible woman and a kindly; with her, diseases are pets to be tickled with a patent medicine."

"Yes, she carries her neuralgia about with her as the Newport ladies do their pugs," threw in Diana. Loughborough, still on the warpath against the stupidities encountered in his practice, continued, "And there's Vanessa Spangler, the dumbest of them all. Disease is her bosom friend. If she could forget herself for one little twenty-four hours, she'd mount on the upward wave towards recovery."

Of course, Dr. Fawnystawk pooh-poohed Loughborough's hopefulness, calling it the ravings of a visionary.

"But, my dear sir," cried Loughborough, "could I ever have cured a patient without the hope of doing so? Hope gives wings to resolution; 'tis the blossoming flower of energy. Why, it is one of the Christian graces; it is your bounden duty to acquire it."

"Is it in the Bible?" asked Lou-i-sy, eager always to see her lover proved right.

"Bring it here," was his answer.

It was brought, and he read in his deep voice, enriched with the beautiful European vowel-sound of a, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three."

"But the greatest of these is charity," half whispered Lou-i-sy.

Diana, charming young heathen, murmured something about Pandora's box; while old Fawnystawk, shutting his ears to the words of holy writ, and regarding disease as an institution not to be done away with, even in imagination, grunted out, "When a man ails, the Lord Almighty means the drugs to do the business. He sent the sickness, and He sent the drugs to cure with. Hope and that is mighty fine talking, but you

can't rub a rheumatic arm with hope. You want opodeldoc for that."

Loughborough laughed. He did not care to pursue the argument, but he asked, with a quizzical wrinkle about his mouth, "When a man or a woman lacks will-power, what drug will you give them, Dr. Fawny-stawk."

"Red-oak bark, son-in-law," replied Dr. Fawny-stawk, bringing his hand down with a rap on the arm of his wooden chair. "Red-oak bark will tone up every part of you; it will tune you to concert-pitch; it will lift you as high as your muscles will let you go."

Dr. Fawnystawk was gratified with his own logic; but he was hurt at Loughborough always having the two ladies on his side.

Loughborough was out of the county for several days, during which time Dr. Fawnystawk stole a march on him, and paid one or two professional visits to Miss Spangler. He happened there, one day, with several countrymen, who had dropped in to pay their respects to the Spanglers and to ask how Vanessy was. The measurings of red-oak bark, valerian, et cætera, were got through with by the doctor as quickly as possible, that he might sit down in the outer room and enjoy a social hour while dinner was preparing. Conversation, like the coy damsel she is in Hessian neighborhoods, required some coaxing at first.

"Good-morning, Mr. Winker," Dr. Fawnystawk led off.

"Ugh!" was the return-lead from Mr. Winker, who, tilting his chair on its two hind-legs, balanced

rather dangerously, surveying at the same time his knees, each of which showed a square patch of bright blue, set thereon, probably, by the tender hands of his spouse.

"How do you feel this morning, Mr. Winker?"

"Ugh!" was the reiterated grunt, and Mr. Winker refused to let go the observation of his knees. Dr. Fawnystawk declined to be vanquished, so he turned to the next gentleman, Billy Funk.

"Well, Funk, how's the girls? I never see them about. Be they domestic?"

Such interest on the part of the family physician was only natural, seeing that he had helped these two young ladies to enter the world.

Funk brightened; he was at home on the subject of his own family, and he was grateful that he could feel the flow upon his lips. "Yes, doctor, my daughter Betsy she are domestic; my daughter Marthy she are a very fat gal."

It may be that the juxtaposition of ideas in this phrase did not happen according to the rules of logic; but the words stated facts, and that was sufficient.

"Come, Dr. Fawnystawk," said Mrs. Spangler, thrusting her head in at the room door, "set down and have a bite."

"What! time to eat a'ready? Why, bless my soul, if there ain't the dinner-horn." Dr. Fawnystawk concealed his eagerness behind the veil of reserve; for he liked wonderfully well to taste other folks' middlin', sometimes. Mrs. Spangler, looking at her bashful visitors with an invitingly scarlet face, repeatedly pressed her hospitality with strict impartiality. "Come, doctor; come, Mr. Winker; come, Mr. Funk."

Winker sidled towards the dining-room with a sheepish glance at the pleasant tableau presented by the well-spread table. Funk hesitated, with the words,—

"I haven't no 'casion, marm."

"Take a seat, Funk, take a seat," cried Mr. Spangler, with pre-prandial jocularity, and motioning towards a deal chair. "I'd rather feed six hungry men than one as hasn't no 'casion." He laughed a dry, spent little laugh at his own facetiousness, and Funk laughed, too. And why? He had spied on a side-table the biggest watermelon he had ever laid his light-blue goggle eyes on.

Mrs. Spangler was unwearying in her hospitality. She plied her guests with such questions as these: "Have some fruit, Mr. Winker? A glass of sweet milk or sour-r, Mr. Funk? Cold or hot slaw, Dr. Fawnystawk?" In the Hessian menu, the dish commonly called kohl-slaw is subjected to degrees of difference in temperature, as cold, hot, or warm, slaw. "Have wheat or corn bread?" pursued the lady of the house, keeping off flies by means of a bunch of peacock-feathers and offering a dish whereon were heaped pones of corn-meal bread. "Corn-bread for me. I can't go back on my raisin', though your wheat loaf is as likely as any I see hereabouts," answered Dr. Fawnystawk; while Billy Funk, suiting the action to the word, cut open one of the pones and set free a cloud of steam. What a nice hot bed for the lump of butter which he immediately proceeded to tuck away in the recesses of the steaming corn-meal. The sight alone made his mouth water; but the touch, when a moment later he stowed an enormous wedge of the same into his cavern-

ous jaws, made his eyes water most unpleasantly. An interval of agony ensued, during which time the sufferer, poor Billy Funk, tossed the infernal mouthful to and fro from the inner wall of one cheek across to the inner wall of the other, opening and shutting his mouth at the same time, to let in a draught of air and institute the process of cooling; a potation of milk now and then added the douche necessary to achieve this cooling and enable the victim at last to swallow the bread, and thus ease himself of his pains. Billy Funk was not the only sufferer. Mr. Spangler had helped himself likewise, inadvertently, and the heat of the corn-bread in his mouth imparted a dash of heat to the words of reproach he addressed to his wife as soon as he could articulate.

"Mrs. Spangler, you ought to have more prudence than help to this hot corn-bread, and Sally (referring to a daughter of eleven) ought to had more prudence than to put this hot corn-bread on the table, and Bets (referring to the colored woman in the kitchen) she ought to had more prudence than to have baked it so." With Mr. Spangler, prudence and her child, economy, were his cardinal virtues.

When Dr. Fawnystawk returned home that afternoon, Lou-i-sy chid him for interfering with Loughborough's patient. To her mind, her father was only Paw or Pappy; while Loughborough was "the doctor," in whose prerogative she placed implicit belief.

"Can't a man pay a friendly visit, Lou-i-sy, on a young 'ooman as he helped bring into the world? I were keen to know, too, what that chap were a-doing with Vanessy; for I tell you, Lou-i-sy, child, she's

bad off, bad off; and no drops have been prescribed for her, no powders, and nothing. Why he's set her to reading books. He might as well drive her crazy at once and be done with it."

Lou-i-sy shook her head, but her fair face showed no wavering line; the repose of perfect trust preserved each feature in the unison of an almost beatific gentleness. That books should be administered as an antidote for physical ailments seemed to her an enigma; nevertheless, unlike her father, she believed that Loughborough could supply the clew to the enigma if he wished.

"The doctor will be put out," was all she said.

Loughborough *was* put out when he came back, and he said so. "Either I must attend Miss Spangler, Dr. Fawnystawk, or you must. I am ready to resign her to you at once." His brows were drawn angrily, his nostrils distended; he chewed the ends of his mustache that he might not say too much. What a provoking, hard-headed, tough-feeling codger, old Fawnystawk was, to be sure, sitting there spitting out tobacco-juice and maxims all in the same squirt.

"Wisdom don't always speak in Latin and Greek. What did you set a weak-brained young 'ooman to reading books for? It's enough to make her act queerer than she's been a-doing, yet."

"A man may give advice, but he cannot give conduct. The girl's disease has to be helped by mind and will more than by anything else; functional disorders are surmounted by this and suitable hygiene."

A look from Loughborough's betrothed had modified his first impulse to anger. Where was the use of

being angry with a pig-headed old gentleman? Pig-headedness was the quality he had been fighting with the alacrity of a St. George ever since his residence in Pughtown. But, alas! pig-headedness is not confined to Pughtown; it runs on trotters abroad throughout the world. What Loughborough had less patience with than anything else, was the materialism which pervades the medical fraternity. They give iron and quinine for broken hearts; morphine or chloral hydrate for weakened brains; to please fools, they commit sinful errors; to provide present relief, they insure future pain. They forbid mental exercise to people who are suffering from excessive emotionality more than from anything else; they disregard the co-operation of the moral with the physical nature; their advice is general and vague, never particular and individual. Why? Because they do not take the time to study the patient and the cause of his disorder. The practice is reducible to a formula; and the majority of physicians take refuge from their ignorance of the profession of medicine in the greater definiteness offered by surgery. They regard the human body as a machine, and the profession as an exact science, like mathematics or chemistry. Such were Loughborough's opinions, and to war against carelessness and hasty diagnosing was a part of his mission.

"I will never have so large a number of patients that I cannot be personally interested in each one," he said; and Dr. Fawnystawk, between tobacco spurts and pooh-poohs, retorted,—

"Keep all you have and get all you can is the only way to become a rich man, son-in-law."

"A rich man, yes; if that is my ambition. I work and get money; but I do not work to *get* money only. Money is a good servant, but a bad master; and it is only where honor grows mercenary that money grows honorable."

"What *is* your ambition, son-in-law?"

"My ambition is, not palliation, nor amelioration, but cure, so far as it is possible."

Dr. Fawnystawk thrust out his chin and disgorged himself of a sodden mass of tobacco. "Well, there's no use talking; Lou-i-sy here can tell you that young cocks shun the coops."

Lou-i-sy knew this to be a fact, but she did not understand the application; so she looked in a bewildered way from father to lover, and from lover back to father, fearful lest her too great knowledge of roosters and their ways might betray her into some disloyalty. Her father often set traps, but she refused to enter them, usually, with a discretion which characterized her, despite her slow-mindedness and ignorance on many points.

Several weeks later she and Diana were told by Loughborough that Miss Spangler had gone to Shenandoah, and that he hoped to see her finally restored.

"But I thought she would not be gotten out of the house; how did you manage?" asked Lou-i-sy, in admiration of her lover's success.

"She said she couldn't move across the threshold of the front door; that something was the matter with the muscles of her knee. She fooled them all; they brought her the water she drank,—everything. They

couldn't get her to move. I tried several experiments and failed. So, one morning, I stopped in and said, 'Come, Miss Vanessa, jump into my buggy and have a drive.' She shook her head. Then I said, 'You had better come. McElroy is going to get a lift in Winker's wagon to Winchester, where he's bound for his holiday. He hasn't seen you for so long, he wants a chance of saying how-d'y.' She looked up quick as thought, rose from her chair and walked straight to my buggy. You see she had to have a motive."

Diana pricked up her ears, and asked, "What did she do when she saw Captain McElroy?"

Loughborough laughed, dryly. "She didn't see him that time. I took her a little drive, and asked her how she would like a walk sometimes; she declared that to walk was impossible. When we got to the edge of the creek, I contrived to tilt the buggy, so that she thought she was going to be upset."

"Poor thing! Was she frightened?"

"Out of her wits, I assure you. I told her the wheel had given way, and that it meant a broken neck to ride another step. What did she do but bound out of the buggy by herself and skip on towards home, as briskly as you please."

Diana laughed at this confession of ruse, but Lou-i-sy's glance was one of reproach. Hers was no mind for stratagem. In answer to her glance, Loughborough said,—

"She has the physical power, Lou-i-sy; the directing of it by an adequate motive is to her a necessity; if she cannot supply the motive, some one else must."

Miss Fawnystawk appeared partly satisfied, while Diana threw in,—

"Is it not strange that Vanessa Spangler, with those great red cheeks of hers, should be such a reed in the blast?"

"It is violently red-cheeked women who are under the dominion of their blood," answered Loughborough. "Nerves give power of resisting, mind adds the quality of endurance. Now you, Miss Fontaine, have little color, little flesh; you quiver with nerve; but I would stake you against six Vanessa Spanglers for power and endurance."

CHAPTER XII.

DIANA'S stay at Cloverdale was drawing to a close; but, before leaving, she and Miss Fawnystawk were to have a day of shopping in Winchester. First, however, there was work to be done at home; for Lou-i-sy was far too prudent a housekeeper to be "up and away," as she said, before casting her eye upon the morrow's meals, as well as upon every nook and cranny in her tidy house. "Sun-up," on the day intended for this shopping expedition, found her broom whisking about diligently. When Loughborough passed through the hall, whistling, the dogs springing at his heels, she stood in the summer dining-room too much absorbed to notice him. This summer dining-room was a capa-

cious, matted chamber, shuttered into a dim green twilight; and Lou-i-sy, beside a large table in the centre of the room, hovered over a row of delicately-fluted, palely-brown pies. Loughborough caught a glimpse of a dish of honey too, a loaf of cake, and a huge yellow dish which contained, no doubt, the sugared remains of some summer fruit. This was no time to intrude, so he went on his way to the front door, which stood open. A sharp though hot wind was sowing the grass-plot of the garden and the planks of the porch with rose-petals; and, as this carpet of blossoms must be gotten rid of before the prudent Lou-i-sy could think of going townwards, Diana stood without, venting her youthful impatience by means of broom-flutterings.

There is nothing in the world more becoming to the form of man or beast than industry. The nest-building bird, the honey-filching bee, the nut-cracking squirrel, the munching cow, the cream-churning damsel, the bread-making woman, the wood-chopping man, —all these and more attest to the beauty as well as the dignity of occupation. Loughborough stood quietly for a few moments watching her handle the broom. She did not abate her occupation, but glanced up at him with a frank smile of good-morning. McElroy's eyes, of drowsy, velvety depths, half drooped under pendulous lids, had often touched her person, through the sense of vision, with an intensity which made her painfully self-conscious. Loughborough's glances, on the contrary, cooled. His view was large; he saw more, even, than he appeared to be seeing. He did not trouble a woman with his look, and yet no detail of

Diana's pretty assiduity with her broom was lost, and her wholesomeness pleased him. While patting the dog, he noted the swing of her skirts over the firm yet slim, girlish hips, and their break into ripples along the line of the limbs. A smile twitched upward the corners of his mouth, giving the savor of salt to his words, pronounced by a voice with a chirp in it,—

"Did you ever hear the adage, Miss Fontaine, that 'While the tall maid is stooping, the little one hath swept the house'?"

"Do not contrast me with Lou-i-sy, Dr. Loughborough; there is no point in which she does not eclipse me. Her foresight has given me the very fever of energy," she answered, laughing, and leaning upon her broom-handle. "We cannot go to town, you know, until she has finished baking pies for to-morrow, —and for all next week, who knows? After which they will be set out on the table in the summer dining-room and covered with a clean table-cloth; no intrusion even for flies."

"Nor for hungry men?"

Miss Fontaine shook her head. To her, Lou-i-sy's housekeeping was a *genre* picture which might elicit a smile of criticism as well as a grain of approbation. Her smile was quite transparent to the sarcasm behind it. Loughborough gave a quick little laugh. He was not one of the men with whom the work is everything, the human being nothing. He reverenced his betrothed, though her superstitions, both of pantry and church, he smiled at; the overcoming of them would be gradual work, he knew.

"Do you know, Miss Fontaine, the devil will not

show himself on Apple-Pie Ridge, for fear of being put into a pie."

"I thought you considered that either he or one of his imps must be hidden under every piece of top-crust ever baked, Dr. Loughborough, and that your crusade was against imp and pie; if so, then Apple-Pie Ridge is a fine field for the exploits of the knight, Sir Launce," she courtesied, playfully.

"No knight is ever successful unless some lady espouses his cause. Will you assist me, Miss Fontaine, in my crusade against the inevitable, indigestible, iniquitous pie?"

To this spirited appeal, Diana shook out an emphatic negative. She was a young woman with an appetite and a digestion rarely encountered. Having thriven on Hessian pastries and Hessian dumplings, she had no fault to find with them. She was on good terms with the world when it accepted her, and on excellent terms, it must be added, with both stomach and conscience.

"Apple-Pie Ridge! The very name has power to stir me this soon after breakfast. It melts in your mouth, like one of Lou-i-sy's high-flown puff-pastry tarts."

Thus defying the world of pies, she leaned upon her broom-handle and rested her eyes, grave with pondering, upon her companion. Their color, like the dark markings of an agate, penetrated. A man without a superstition is a man without a shadow. Loughborough's superstition had been that the eyes colored for truth were blue ones. "Made for earnest granting, taking color from the skies, can Heaven's truth be wanting?" Now, however, he felt this superstition

break like a brittle glass. He caught himself warming into sudden, unspoken praise of gray eyes flecked with brown. In the midst of a rush of heat, he was conscious of saying inwardly, "Hazel-nuts, and sweeter than their kernels." The little flurry was interrupted the next moment by Diana, who asked, still leaning upon her broom-handle,—

"Apple-Pie Ridge! Pray, what suggested the name? Do you know?"

Loughborough *did* know some rustic anecdote, which he told with a business-like precision, turning, as he did so, from these gray eyes and looking down into the softly-brown, loving ones of Dr. Fawnystawk's collie.

"Before the days of steam, the people about here used to haul their produce to Baltimore in wagons. The wagoners stopped often to rest and feed upon this ridge; and, it being a famous apple-country, they fared upon apple-pies. These were praised by the travellers, until there arose a rivalry among the housekeepers of the country-side, each striving to make a better and a larger pie than her neighbor. One woman, a widow, succeeded in getting her pies so large that a whimsical wagoner once stopped the wheel of his cart with it, saying that it would do better for scotching than chewing. When this good fellow came back from Baltimore after selling his produce, he married the widow who made the pie. It is said that he forbade her from ever after making one that should exceed the reasonable size. He was a smart man; his name, Peter Fawnystawk, Lou-i-sy's grandfather. But this tale will hardly be romantic enough for your taste, Miss Fontaine?"

"Romantic?" exclaimed Diana; "it is exquisite, delightfully romantic! Peter Fawnystawk—wagoner—a widow—a pie—a love-affair. The story is complete." Miss Fontaine hummed, wheeling about with fantastic steps, "'Sing a song a sixpence, a pocketful of rye; four and twenty black birds baked in a pie.' You see a pie can be a symbol."

She looked up, letting her eyes rove to the tree-tops, which showed through them glimpses of a pale, hot, blue sky. Her imagination was tripping up a staircase of symbols to the unimagined beyond. Loughborough had the benefit of her entire outward personality without being called into question by the eyes, which so often play the part of judiciary. An hour of a sunny morning on the front porch of a farm-house may throw its shadow upon more than one dial-plate. The sharp summer breeze, parting the trees and tossing the vines, mingled sunbeam with shadow in a most maddening way upon the planks of the piazza, upon the grass, and upon the brick-work of the house. Only nature could disentangle that maze of black and gold. The intermittent puffs of air ruffled the hair on the dog's back and tried to break the evenness of Miss Fontaine's thick brown locks; but they stood the test well. Hair gives all the finishing touches to the symmetry of the human form. There were no waves, and but few short strands in the sweep of her shadowed hair, smooth and abundant on the temples, curved into a suberb loop at the back of her head. But it was not the hair nor the coloring which at this moment attracted the young physician's attention. His study of human nature had never been from motives of curiosity

and entertainment, but from those dictated by a deep purpose. Dissection with him was simply the means to healing or helping.

Why do men write about eyes, complexions, not chins? The statue is eyeless, complexionless; yet the statue reveals the ethical more than the picture. Would you cast the abstract virtues into bronze, cut them upon marble, or delineate them with colors? The chin, in a degree, is the corner-stone of the human temple. It shows how much the material is restrained by the spiritual: this is the clue to a man's history. The eyebrows are the actresses' feature; the eyes, the poets',—the latter being the fountain-head of the emotions. Consult the nose for the critic, the brow for the statesman, the chin and lower extremity of jaw for the general. Some such survey of the general history of features flashed through Loughborough's brain while gazing at the dainty little chin of Diana lifted pleadingly; it indicated less of self-restraint than of self-immolation to the human element.

Pose and revery were interrupted by Miss Fawnystawk, who evinced surprise that Diana also was not ready. "I shall be ready before the carriage is at the block," was her answer, as she disappeared within the door. Loughborough cleared the steps with a couple of bounds and went in search of the carriage. Servants were scarce in these days and in this part of the country, and he was going to drive the ladies to town. Lou-i-sy's dress, as Loughborough handed her in, rattled with a cleanliness that was audible; her bonnet was a trifle over-fine; but there was always that about Lou-i-sy which appealed pleasantly to the

eye; a whiteness and feather-softness of throat and cheek which made you indulgent to her crudenesses, and which made you think of her with an inward caress. Loughborough patted her hand with something of this caress as she took her seat, and she laid the other hand upon his shoulder with an expression all benignance and tenderness. This was the first demonstration that Diana had ever seen pass between these two, and, strange to say, it hurt her. When the two ladies were placed, Loughborough, fascinating in his ugliness, as Diana admitted, sprang into the front seat and took up the reins. The four miles which lay betwixt Cloverdale and Winchester were filled with her chatter. She talked to make Loughborough look around, for he was silent; but the conversation had to be kept up, and was kept up, mainly, by the ladies,—Diana, with her brilliant paragraphs; Lou-i-sy, with her sedate little foot-notes. Though Lou-i-sy's voice was pleasant, there was a burr in her r's which smote the ear like an echo of the Pennsylvania Dutch from which her tongue had descended; but Diana's words sailed along upon the stream of talk, smooth and fair, as swans. Her dissyllables were melodious doublets; her trisyllables, rhythmic,—the whole a tuneful utterance so mind-satisfying that after it one would hardly care for a song.

Despite the honeyed speech pouring sweetly upon his ear, Loughborough's brows were knitted. His tongue was not unloosened until Lou-i-sy, getting out of the carriage on the outskirts of Winchester to see Cousin 'Becca Fawnystawk, said, "Take Dianny all over town, doctor; drive her a little bit on the Clarke

and Martinsburg pikes. Oh, and show her the gardens do; the roses there are such beauties."

"And when will we see you again, Lou-i-sy?" asked Diana, changing her position to the front seat in order to be more companionable with Loughborough.

"In an hour or so, I reckon. I've to go to the green-grocer's and to the hardware man's; so don't hurry. We'll meet at the dry-goods store on Main Street. '*The doctor*' knows. You know, doctor?"

Lou-i-sy shook out skirts, which gave an answering rattle, smoothed her hat-strings, turned up the cedar-path that led to the house, and was lost to view. Loughborough fluttered his reins and the rockaway started on its tour of exploration. Diana made the most of the sight-seeing, for this was her first visit to Winchester. "Here are the breast-works thrown up during the war," or "Here is the house where that arch-tyrant Milroy quartered himself when the town was in Yankee lines," or "Here is the Indian Spring; if you drink its waters you will be sure to come back to Winchester before you die," or "Here is the old Sensenny mansion, which owns a ghost," or "This is the house in which the belle of Winchester lives; here are the gardens, Lou-i-sy's paradise." Such were bits of information given by Loughborough, who was conscious of a play of very mobile features under the nodding brim of a black straw hat garlanded with artificial roses.

At the gardens she clamored for flowers; she *must* have a bouquet; Loughborough *must* get out, too, and help her select. "The bouquet is for Lou-i-sy, you know," she said, and she made him do a good deal of

pretty fooling before she had done with him that morning. "Lou-i-sy lent you to me, Dr. Loughborough. She will not be ready for hours, I know. She has coffee to get, and sugar and a rolling-pin. Heaven knows what all."

Of the gardener she asked a thousand questions, and took views of the Blue Ridge from different points. The dry-as-dust old Scotch gardener was pleased to answer questions brilliantly put; and he ended by presenting to the young lady a bunch of his choicest roses, with his compliments, and an attempt at a courtly bow which, by contrast with his figure, niggardly in allowance of flesh, was humorously grotesque. When Diana was seated in the rockaway again, she had a lapful of white and lavender flowers for Lou-i-sy, together with packages of roots and slips, and her own bosom full of great, tall pink and crimson roses that spread themselves with that imperious splendor of hue which is of itself a kind of magnetism. Even Loughborough was made to wear a nosegay of some aromatic herb.

"I love scent," said Diana, taking a deep breath, then applying first one flower to her nostrils for a sniff, afterwards another. "My mother was devoted to artificial perfumes,—distillations, essences, extracts, powders. She spent a great deal of her pin-money in sachet-bags and colognes. I cannot endure such perfumes; but I love the natural ones. They have almost as much meaning for me as music or painting."

Loughborough, as we have said before, enjoyed the raptures of this young woman's healthful organism. He said, with a glance at the daintily intoxicated tip

of her nose as it titillated first one flower, then another, of the bouquet she held in her hands,—

"Smell is a sense much developed in the brute, but rudimentary in man; a dog dreams in smells, no doubt, as we dream in visions or sounds."

"I am a hound for keenness of scent," laughed Diana, crushing a bit of myrtle against her upper lip. "I smelled yellow jessamine once in a hot-house; it is not so sweet as it is wild and sad. There is a strain of melancholy in its odor that penetrates me like the minor chords in music. Do you know I should like to wear yellow jessamine in my hair when I listen to Chopin? Do you think me silly?" she asked, with a sudden bend of her head.

Loughborough did not answer at first; he looked thoughtful. "By no means, Miss Fontaine; but this excessive refinement of the senses requires a wonderful amount of reason and will-power, you must remember, to overbalance it. I was thinking, too, that if successive generations increase their refinement continuously, they would after a while develop a new sense; and that in the course of time a new species might be evolved."

"You believe in evolution. I heard it much discussed in New York, but it is hard to trace. I heard many lectures upon it; but is not development spasmodic instead of continuous."

"Just so. You have caught the idea exactly. Scientific men generally want to make it a regular piece of mechanism, which it is not; and are wildly alert for missing links."

When they reached the Shawnee Spring, Diana got out to have a taste of its fabled waters.

"Do you know, I like the Valley now. I thought I would not at first. I shall drink, that I may come back before I die; that is, if I have to leave it."

"What has made you like it here?" asked Loughborough, kneeling beside the spring in the long thick grass. His voice expressed unusual interest, but his head was drooped toward the clear, deep pool, because he was dipping water into the tincup, fastened by a chain to the smooth flat stone that formed the curb on one side.

"You have had something—a great deal—to do with it."

"And McElroy?" Loughborough let the sparkling water flow in, then out of, the cup.

"Not Captain McElroy. He might interest me in himself, but not in anything else. He would make a place attractive only so far as it was *his* environment. Do you understand?"

Diana had to lower her head in order to drink from the cup, now filled, for the chain attached to its handle was a short one; her knees dipped down into the bed of ferns, and she bent her head also poolward. She saw first her own face distinctly imaged in the water, afterwards Loughborough's. The clear water over brown earth made a revelation: it gave to his dark, weather-beaten features a look she had never seen upon them before. An earnestnesss, an intensity of gaze which surprised her into a sudden consciousness of new feelings. Had he ever looked so at Lou-i-sy? Diana believed not. It must be the water,—refraction, she supposed,—and a pair of troubled orbs met Loughborough's in the darkling pool. The next instant a

rose was snapped from its stem and tossed into the water to disturb the smooth expanse and shut away the tell-tale picture. The crimson globe of the full-blown rose floated slowly and heavily upon the water's surface. When Diana finally looked away from it and stood up, it was to perceive Loughborough at her side, also standing and holding towards her the cup brimming with water.

"I don't believe I care for any now," she said, turning away abashed, yet fascinated. "I think we must hurry back to Lou-i-sy. She will wonder what has become of us."

"Yes." Loughborough's voice was gentle, but a trifle chill, as he insisted, "I knew we were late when we came here, but you must drink some of the water now, Miss Fontaine; for, though you will certainly leave us some day, you must come back again to the Valley and see Lou-i-sy a happy wife; that will be worth coming for."

Whatever momentary self-surrender there had been, it was over now, and Diana felt that she must have mistaken the darkly tender glance she saw reflected in the pool. She turned to take the cup, but, instead, overturned it with the abruptness of the movement.

"See what you have done, Miss Fontaine! You will leave us, and you will not come back. Is that the way you are going to do?"

His tone was kind, but careless. He said to himself the temptations of this world are in proportion to one's powers. It is because she is unguarded that others are so with her; but whatever I might feel, I am incapable of treachery. He helped her into the carriage,

and the wheels soon clattered over the cobble-stones of Main Street between a double line of paltry shops.

"These cobble-stones could tell some gallant tales of the kind that you like, Miss Fontaine," said Loughborough, not wishing his companion to give herself up to thoughtful silence.

"Of Milroy and Banks?" she answered, languidly.

"Yes, and of others whom you know well. When Winchester was in northern lines, Ashby, McElroy, and your Uncle Grat Fontaine rode down this street on their black horses, stopped in front of the hotel, waved their plumed hats about their heads, and cried, 'Hurrah for the Confederacy' three times, and then galloped out of town unmolested, though the whole place was blue with Yankees, who thought, of course, that it was a surprise, and that thousands of our men were in the rear. Indeed, they had not time to think at all, or they would never have allowed to slip a chance of capturing the daring Ashby. Grat says that was the only time he ever saw Ashby run his horse. He ran when he thought they had time to recover from their surprise."

Loughborough, occupied with his narrative and his horses, did not observe the loungers along the street until he felt his sleeve twitched and heard his companion interrupt the story with this question, in a sharp, horror-stricken voice,—

"Who is that, for heaven's sake, leaning against the pillars of the hotel yonder?"

Loughborough looked up and saw a man in a tattered uniform leaning against one of the pillars that supported the porch of the hotel. His eyes were closed; his arms hung loose; his mouth was half-open.

His face was pale and swollen, but its features were of a refined delicacy; and his pointed light beard and long loose hair gave him the air of some beautiful madman; of some Greek god disguised in the clothes of a Confederate soldier, but asleep after a debauch. A shudder went through Diana's form when she fully recognized Roy McElroy, beautiful in his impotency. The contrast between his intellectual features and his collapsed attitude was the very climax of pathos.

"What is the matter with him?"

"He is damned." In answer to his companion's raised eyebrow, "Pshaw. I mean he has damned himself."

"But what is it?" Diana insisted, and her voice had overtones in it like a violin-string.

"An opium-dream."

"Is Captain McElroy an opium-eater?"

"Yes, ever since the war."

"Hideous; but you will cure him, Dr. Loughborough?"

"He will never be cured, Miss Fontaine."

"But if some one could influence him," she ventured.

Loughborough shook his head. "I do not say that cure is impossible; but for McElroy, with his characteristics as a man, it is improbable. No human influence would avail; the only man capable of curing him is he himself."

They had driven on a little way, and then Diana gave her hand passively to Loughborough to be helped out of the carriage. He might have added other faults besides that of opium-eating as being characteristic of McElroy, but of what avail? He preferred to give a

silver bridge to the flying enemy. "Poor McElroy! he is a worse enemy to himself than to any one else," he added, when they stood together on the curbstone.

"Vanessa Spangler," murmured Diana; "her present condition is surely better than marriage with McElroy. One evil is bad; multiplied, is worse."

"Ah, but you cannot calculate moral qualities by arithmetic; may not the evils meet, clash, and one become crushed out or lessened? In a fight between dragons, one is killed." Loughborough's answer to Diana's enthusiasm was a smile touched with a certain caustic humor, often visible in his countenance; in an instant, however, he said,—

"Yes; sometimes one of the dragons kills the other; sometimes they produce a spawn of young ones. In human affairs, Miss Fontaine, we have a loophole left us through which hope can peer with her pretty face. It is this which makes me the hopeful fellow that I am. Still, I am often forced to admit that the probabilities set so strongly in a given direction that the inference can be foreseen almost to a certainty. Hope in the face of strong conviction is capable of dwindling into an absurd sentimentalism."

There was no drivelling about Diana Fontaine, and yet she did not dislike the word sentimentalism; she put her own construction upon it and endowed it with her favorite qualities. Personified sentimentalism appeared to her a strictly feminine being, wearing the pearls of elegance strung about her like rare ornaments; and it was this creature of her fancy that had helped to place her under McElroy's spell. But there was no time for further conversation. Lou-i-sy now came

up to them with a flustered look and an armful of bundles.

Diana had no clear remembrance of what followed that day except the ride home in the evening. She had a confused idea of going into an endless number of shops, and of being conducted to an ice-cream parlor, where the three took a chilly collation together, Lou-i-sy chatting about green-grocers, tin-pans, flower-seeds, fruit of the loom, Wamsutta cotton, which was best? while Loughborough discoursed upon the drugs he had purchased, and which he wished he would never be forced to use. Diana swallowed frozen-cream without tasting it, and kept silent. To her vision, the figure of McElroy was paramount. That sculpture-like apathy; those heavy, half-closed lids; that monotony of pallor; that semi-paralysis of will evidenced in the lax limbs and drooping, yet plump, shoulder-breadth, as his figure, like a parody upon helplessness, leaned against the wooden prop of the portico belonging to the hotel. The utter shamelessness, the humiliating insensibility of that leaning figure, sickened her fresh, healthful imagination. She had seen this man, it must be remembered, glued to the belly of his racing steed; had seen him playing the *rôle* of the knight and looking it ideally. She had heard him breathing out the sweetest emotions in the sweetest of tenors upon the night-air, and the words winging upwards and nestling about her heart. How should you chide? Not youth for having the weaknesses necessary to youth, but youth for not finally surmounting them.

McElroy, in some fashion, had vivified history and romance for Miss Fontaine. She had read of courts

of love, of chevaliers, of Arabian horsemem, of minstrels, in her text-books; but she had seen them all united in the person of McElroy. He had possessed some charms; she had endowed him with a thousand new ones. Now she felt as if she were the victim of a cheat; and this idea made her heart react with violence against him whom she had thus endowed. Instead of a picturesque warrior, she had this day seen an opium-eater, exhibiting his cravenness and his undignified tatters in the very heart of the town. In her face he had flaunted his impotence; his vague, futile, half-conscious enjoyment of a condition which is the very climax of egotism, both bodily and mental. Despair would have had more promise in it than that sublimity of negation which she had seen. The disappointment which this revelation of his true self produced in her mind was so great that it left no room for pity; but the ride home wrought a change in the current of her thoughts.

The evening was beautiful. Lou-i-sy overflowed with satisfaction in having completed a number of highly useful purchases; the horses, conscious that the firm macadamized road they were treading led homeward, trotted cheerily, and sniffed the air laden with delicate thrills of clover and a myriad of field-scents which only their nostrils were sufficiently acute to be sensible of.

Diana was not the chatter-box she had been in the morning; but she strove to talk. Loughborough's large ideas seemed to give her little ones a shake that did them good. "The difference between us is that he is clever in almost every point, whereas I am only

clever in a few," was the naïve admission to herself. Very early in their acquaintance, she had discovered that Loughborough was a keen marksman at truth, hitting it with a fine shaft, not stumbling upon it unwittingly. His honor was not of the commercial kind; he did not haggle over the virtues, cheating God with the smallest possible amount of them; nor did he set them in a pair of scales and weigh them against gain, —so much honesty for so much policy; so many ounces of candor, or of self-restraint, or of courage, as if these qualities were coffees, sugars, teas. Diana rather felt than knew all this; but feelings have more weight with young persons than knowledge.

"The war! the war!" she cried half wistfully, half listlessly, as Loughborough snapped his whip at the fortifications and asked Miss Fontaine if she remembered passing them that morning. "How the war colors everything in this country! Like Turner's pictures, Virginia has an atmosphere,—an historical one, I mean. I wish I had been here then. I should so like to have lived intensely. I am always jealous of Lou-i-sy for having had a share in such great events. I feel as if I had missed an experience which can never be made up to me quite."

Lou-i-sy's gentle, rather pensive eyes rested upon the great square shoulders of her betrothed, who sat directly in front of her. There was her event, roughly hewn and squarely built, near to her, so that she could surround him with a halo of the tenderest thoughts. "It is not all women who are as lucky as Lou-i-sy," was Diana's reflection, and then she heard Loughborough say,—

"It was an experience worth having, Miss Fontaine. I would not have given it for a diploma from the Philadelphia medical school and four years' study in Germany, which I missed on account of it. The war marks the ending of things that were and the beginning of a distinctly new era."

"A new era? That at least shows progress."

"Not necessarily, Miss Fontaine. Five thousand years of history have pretty well proved that, under human conditions, there is no ideal government; the best we can do is to approximate it."

Loughborough turned his head to drink peace and consolation from the ineffable sweetness that dwelt in Miss Fawnystawk's countenance; but his eyes in passing were held prisoners by Diana. He leaned his elbow on the back of the seat, and held the reins loosely in order to give his attention to her. Somehow, she disturbed him. She would not let him be passive, nor at peace. Her brow was a mass of frowns induced by thought. Then a smile, sharp, iridescent, was unsheathed from her lip; it shot across her countenance, gleaming upon the young rounding of flesh and the sensitive eyes like a brilliant dagger. No; he could not be at peace with himself; he took refuge in generalities.

"You know I am a Confederate to the heart, Miss Fontaine. I do not approve the absolute monarchy which we see in Russia, nor the absolute democracy which those who labor to centralize power would produce in our national government. In one case, man is the victim of a fatal heredity; in the other, of the foolish freak of the sensation-loving populace. The

mean between these is that federation of independent States established by our fathers, to be united only in those points which relate to general benefit. This is the nearest approach to individualism and to liberty; this is what we Southerners fought for during the great struggle. It was not *rex* we wanted, but *lex*, and we got *fex*."

A veil dropped over Diana's bright countenance. She did not understand much about States'-rights nor about the centralizing of power. She had felt conscious, at first, that Loughborough was moving in unison with the rhythm of her own feelings, but now he had beaten away into the great sea of generalities. She liked to try to compel him; but she realized that she was more compelled than he. She had many years in which to discover that the merging of self into the universal is the only rest which the soul can ever find. The beings who have experienced this are the ones who have foretastes of heaven. The bursting of bonds, the throwing off of limitations, is not in itself agony; it merely makes us conscious of the agony we have before been enduring. The tight glove, the tight shoe yield the sharpest pain by removal. Lou-i-sy murmured something about the Yankees,—her nearest approach to saying anything spiteful. Loughborough declared that his patriotism did not extend beyond the border-line of Virginia. Diana broke the straight line of her brows and gave the ex-soldier a taste of scorn.

"A narrow patriotism. I thought, Dr. Loughborough, that you boasted of sympathy for the race?"

Loughborough did not notice the young lady's scorn any more than he did the horse-fly which had settled

on the back of his shaggy gray coat; but he volunteered to explain.

"Philanthropy is a broad development of patriotism, but perfectly distinguishable from it; for the correct valuation of each, judgment is needed. That is the ground for my quarrel with the human race, Miss Fontaine,—want of judgment. It has every faculty developed to a higher degree than that one. The end and aim of educators should be to train judgment; it is the golden hinge on which the virtues move and which opens to man the gate of heaven."

Lou-i-sy was always gratified when the word heaven occurred in their conversations, for, much as she trusted her lover, she stood greatly in awe of his independence in thinking. Diana surrendered herself to what she called a train of thought, but which was in reality a series of fine-spun feelings. This delicate young animal had, as we have said before, done far more feeling than thinking, and Loughborough very often made her dumbly conscious of this.

CHAPTER XIII.

GRAT FONTAINE was a lazy fellow. He seethed with inward fires, yet never brought one poor little plan to a parboil. His one passion was politics, yet this he indulged chiefly by talking. He inherited some of the influence and magnetism of his father, the old squire; but he was without Billy's tenacity of purpose. On

an afternoon towards the close of September, he and Diana sat at one end of the long, low porch at the Valley Farm.

"Uncle Grat, why don't you go actively into politics?" she asked.

"What's the use?" was the savage retort, animated by whiffs of pipe-tobacco. "We have to face carpet-baggers, scalawags, negroes. There's no such thing as fair play. You must remember, Di, we've been beaten." There was a sulky resistance in his look and posture, for oppression roused the devil in him.

"But this is fatalism, Uncle Grat." Diana had caught this word from Loughborough, and she loosed it now from her lips and sent it flying, airily, that it might perch on her uncle's shoulder and give him the peck of disapprobation.

Grat Fontaine tilted his chair so that he could lean his back against the green-painted rail of the porch, and from this throne of masculine independence surveyed his niece, whose greatest fault in his eyes was that she was too elegantly lady-like. He deliberately laid his pipe down upon the floor of the porch, rammed his hands into the pockets of his white drilling trousers, swung his head around, proudly, so as to take in the whole of her person, and retorted, in low but insistent tone,—

"What does a girl know about fatalism or politics? What is a woman, anyhow, but a bundle of fancies, tiptoeing through existence to the tune of—of—'Money musk.'" These words were growled out contemptuously, "Money musk" being the most frivolous tune he could think of at an instant's notice.

Diana, from her coigne of vantage in the angle where the porch-rail met the house partition, surveyed her uncle from head to foot. What a mingling of faults and virtues he was,—his faults over-ripe; his virtues in the green state, yet how handsome, how commanding; what a splendid prime of manhood! His hands, though brown as the sumach berry, had taper fingers; his feet, though incased in boots with long crinkly tops and bespattered with the mud of field and ditch, were small, with arched instep. The Fontaines, every one of them, even in the collateral branches, were proud of their hands, feet, and also of their noses. Grat's nose was a Grecian with full dilating nostrils,—the Grecian adulterated with a strain of the Asiatic, originally. When erect, his figure was notable for its poise, his shoulders being thrown backward, a trifle defiantly, so that his chest drew the bow-shape. His back marked the reservoir of the secret springs of muscular force; the breast, the fortress of feeling which commands those springs; it heaved with the deep breaths of resistance, or it was shaken with pent-up laughter. His waist—small, round, pliant—swelled gently at the hips and formed the pivot for the amply-developed lower limbs. But have a care, Grat! you are good as you are; ten pounds more of flesh would hurt your looks terribly. Hot talking, hard drinking, heavy eating for the next half-dozen years will coarsen those noble proportions. The facial lines, too, are in danger; at present, sentiment, as well as passion, dominates and keeps in restraint the chin and lower jaw; if sentiment and passion are swallowed up by the propensities, your face will tell the tale. Medium

height gains distinction from spareness; it cannot challenge a larger weight than one hundred and sixty pounds avoirdupois. "He has something of the despot in him," thought Diana, pursuing her survey, "and a despot that a woman *might* love; a woman *might* tame him, could the right one come along." Lou-i-sy,—but she knew this was not to be. Lou-i-sy's heart had found its home. "Why does he hate us all so?" she said to herself, then aloud,—

"Your definition of man would be, I suppose, a bundle of facts, *stalking* through the universe to the tune of 'What will you do with my spondulix when your spondulix are gone'?" She hummed the rigmarole, to give her parody zest! "Pray why, Uncle Grattan, do you bring shame upon women? Your mother was a woman, your sisters, I." She laughed, and laid her hand prettily upon his arm, so that he could see each one of the fingers taper like his own, only white and pink, where his were brown and red. He puckered his mouth, trying *not* to look too kindly at her; it was the expression with which he watched Logan graze, or Spread Eagle spring to the snap of his fingers. In spite of the little elegancies which this democratic fellow detested, he felt towards the young girl as he did towards the colts, calves, lambs, and pups.

"You are not a woman, but a witch; that is why I like you now. Yes, my mother was a woman, that is why she used to lecture me as long as I'd listen; my sister Mary Jane is a woman, that is why she whines at me; Miss Sarah Jane Jackson is a woman, that is why she dogs me. Men don't lecture you, nor whine at you, nor dog your heels; but women do. I haven't

any use for women; they tease, tease, tease. Your mother teased your father, Di; they all do. They are like mosquitoes."

Grat snapped at a crowd of midges at that moment dancing in front of his eyes. His abuse was always too downright for Diana to be angered by it. She let her eyes rove, wondering if she could ever convert him to a better opinion of the sex. It was a little before sunset; the day had been warm, but, declining, gave a foretaste of frost. The Run tinkled away under its wooden bridge, a few rods distant, like a fairy's castanets; the mint emitted a sharply-aromatic scent; the wood-pile, on the other side of the paling, was haloed with a saffron blaze from the sun; its posts were so many chunks of gold. Grat's eyes roved, too, more widely, and took in the farther fields and the stock. He had the farmer's power—acquired, no doubt, from the ruminating ox—of keeping silent by the hour together. Diana had no such power as this; hers was in speech rather than in silence.

"Lou-i-sy does not lecture, nor whine, nor dog, nor tease. Surely you can find nothing to say against her, and she is a woman."

"Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk is a clever young woman," answered Grattan, using the word clever in its provincial sense of "kind." "She will not do any of those things, but she'll do something else,—she'll bore, she'll bore a man to death." He took a deep breath, which he emitted at once through swelling nostrils, as if to blow far away from him the image of Lou-i-sy.

That name, as if by magic, conjured up the figure of Loughborough, seen now walking through the

sumach-bushes towards the foot-bridge spanning the Run. For some trifling reason, his marriage, which was to have taken place in the autumn, was now deferred until the following spring. Diana's eye brightened with curiosity as she saw him approach, thinking of this deferment with a sharp sense of satisfaction, and wondering, in her heart of hearts, whether Lou-i-sy ever bored her lover. She did not often see Loughborough, but she believed that she herself did not bore him. "Be umpire," she cried, with a voice of delight, as soon as he came up. "We have almost quarrelled about whether it is worse to be all fancy, as Uncle Grat says woman is, or all fact, as I say man is. Surely, you will not denounce us as my uncle does; it is positively depressing."

"Denunciation is the easiest work in the world, Miss Fontaine," was the doctor's answer, taking a seat on the low step. "The clever man often finds it a luxury; but, like most luxuries, it is dangerous." Loughborough's speculative glance rested upon Fontaine, who, tilted backward in his chair, showed an expression half-froward, half-quizzical.

"Dog-on your would-be gallantry, Loughborough. Are you going to sneak out in that way because there's a woman present?"

"Your uncle here, Miss Fontaine, boasts that he has never been led by a woman; but he is very easily prodded by the imp, Perversity."

"Whether better—woman or imp?" laughed Diana.

"He's a rare, good abuser; the best in the State of Virginia."

"Yes, I know. I know none better; for the last

hour he has been abusing me for everything you can think of,—teeth, eyelashes, gowns. I might help the last; but how can I help being a woman?"

Her appeal had fervor. Loughborough gave a short, dissyllabic laugh before answering, "You are lucky if his objections were chiefly against the fleshly garment and not the real self." Both men glanced at the teeth of squirrel whiteness that showed behind her smile; at the eyelashes that gave a frisky sort of fire to her eyes; at the gown,—simple, sober, well fitting,—which revealed the suppleness of her person. If there were strictures to be passed, they were not to be passed by Loughborough. His thought did not dwell long, however, upon these superficial endowments. In the silence that followed, he thought of the real self that lay behind the fleshly garment. He was a man that liked riddles. Here was a girl with none of the harshness that goes with the grand virtues, and yet one capable of rising to climaxes. She was the unripe fruit of a very precious species. It is not well to mature too quickly,—a quick ripening makes an early rotting. Beware of the youth who leaps into wisdom in his teens; by the time the mustache hides the shape of his lip, he will become a pedagogue, a formalist, a human machine of some kind; he will narrow down into a frightfully pinching groove. In human nature the senses must first play their part, the imagination must delude; for the animal has to purchase experience; this last is not the gift of the gods. In due time maturity will assert itself, and the gradual ripening makes the richer prime. Diana had a good deal of surface brilliancy, but Loughborough had gotten

glimpses of depths beneath, by means of the sudden tear, the irradiating smile. He recognized that she was neither good nor useful, nor simple, like Lou-i-sy, but still that she had a hundred possibilities to Lou-i-sy's one. In short, she was a riddle, and Loughborough liked riddles. Lou-i-sy, in the course of years, might grow more tolerant, even more submissive; but Diana? her life was to be a record of change, with every few years a new era. He had discovered that he had power to stir a different Diana in her from any the others had seen. Did she, in return, have power with him? If this question occurred, it was not now answered. This much he knew, that he set her to thinking, she him to feeling.

When with Lou-i-sy, the two sat down in the chamber of peace; when with Diana, the two knelt down in the temple of beauty. Once in a while, Lou-i-sy's absoluteness of trust annoyed him; but how beautiful was her patience during these periods of irritation. She thought anger was the man's prerogative; if she saw her noble Loughborough harried, there must be cause; so she was never vexed with him, but with the cause. Loughborough's anger, too, was of the restrained kind. A greater conciseness of words, a sharper flash in the eye, a whiter, not a redder, gleam on the rugged cheek, that was all she saw. At such times she would bring him all the balm she had of eye or touch or tread, refraining from speech the while, fearful lest she might not say the right thing, distrustful of herself when in his presence. That he should seek the companionship of others was not unpleasing to her. Was not his delight hers? his success, her

prayer? Jealousy had never thrown its violet, tempest shadows upon her fair countenance. She was the mistress of but few ideas, and she never jarred him with those. You may call this nullity; but it was a sweet nullity, a tender renunciation of self which has never, since the world began, been wholly displeasing to man.

Chaucer's clerk of Oxenford, a learned gentleman, by all the gods and goddesses, makes of Griselda a married angel. Perhaps this ancient type, surviving in the Hessian Lou-i-sy, was more acceptable to the old-world man than to the new. In either case, however, its very submissiveness sometimes tempted rebellion against it.

Loughborough's train of thought threatened to last, so Diana moved from her cramped position with the words,—

"Aunt Mary is enjoying a good half-hour of quiet misery in the sitting-room; let us go in and overwhelm her with a wood-fire and cheerfulness."

Grat's reply was a grunt, the rude fellow. He hated the house where the women sat, where conventionality reigned, and generally kept himself to the porch with his dogs, or to the barn with his horses. In the violence of his rebellion against custom, he forbade a butter-knife, also napkins, upon his table, declaring these appendages to be shilly-shally or genteel, and he pronounced genteel with a grimace, to bring odium upon the quality. Loughborough laughed gently at the thought of enjoying a half-hour of quiet misery. Unlike Grat, he was indulgent to the middle-aged, the feeble, and the commonplace. Grattan, on the other hand, could be downright chivalrous to octogenarian

or brilliant adolescent, but was impatient of the period to be found halfway between. Extreme old age or youth gave him sensations of admiration or the sense of importance; but the unpicturesque period of middle life seemed to him tedious, sterile, unprofitable, flat; his opinion, too, is that of the many.

Loughborough murmured something about going home. Diana objected.

"Come," she said, laying her hand insistently upon his shoulder, "come and see what a wood-fire I can make. You shall help, if you like. We will cheat Aunt Mary out of her misery, Uncle Grat out of his gruffness, you out of your unsociability; come," and of course he went.

Aunt Mary was not to be so easily cheated, as Diana supposed. She vaguely felt that her niece brought the atmosphere of heathendom into the sitting-room, enlivened as it had been for a half-century with only such volumes as Fox's "Book of Martyrs" and "Conversations upon Chemistry." Diana was familiar with the literature which needs quick wits, as well as with all the romances that are in touch with poetry and the sister arts. Miss Fontaine fetched a sigh as she watched this niece, kneeling down upon the rug in front of the hearth-place, laughing back to the brilliant flames which crackled up from the handfuls of chips she kept throwing from time to time upon the larger logs. Here was too audacious an abandonment to pleasure, warmth, laughter, companionship. A gulf divided these two; æstheticism and asceticism face to face are Hebe and Hecate looking into each other's eyes. Asceticism is a parasite. When it springs up in rich natures, it

devours vitality, feeds upon the wholesome ripeness, turns everything morbid. It brings about the very evils it would avoid; it is to unselfishness what prudery is to chastity; to healthy self-restraint what bigotry is to religion. It stretches Health on its bed and turns Hope dizzy. To continue the personification, it sees itself in a magnifying-glass, and dresses to suit the monster face instead of the natural one. Miss Mary Jane's asceticism was not of so strong a type; but she had been brought up to deny herself foolishly; to place a high valuation upon plainness, commonness, meagreness, mere utility; to pinch her body and to starve her mind. Diana's self-surrender to beauty and her hot vindication of the æsthetic looked to Miss Mary Jane like wantonness, inordinate worldliness; and it may be that she had some right on her side. To hear a niece of hers describing the playing of Liszt and Rubinstein, or reciting poetry with a great deal of expression, appeared unmaidenly to her insular notions.

"I wish you had your flute, Dr. Loughborough," said the young lady, petulantly; but the flute was at the Fawnystawks. "I should like to teach you that little song of Liszt's I was describing to you the other day: it is a gem. If you could but hear him play. You forget the instrument. He simply tosses the melody up in the air and it comes down upon you from heaven."

Miss Mary Jane gave a deep crooning sigh from her rocker; she thought that actresses must talk in this way, and she disapproved. Diana played upon an imaginary piano in the air, hummed a bar to illustrate her acceptance of something that Loughborough said,

discovered that her uncle did not care for rhapsodizing about music, and proposed to recite some poetry; for she was a young person in whom the flow of ideas and words pulse along in parallel streams. She had, too, a sense of her own importance, a quality which substituted, on occasions, that higher one, a sense of responsibility. Here, again, she and her aunt diverged, for Miss Mary Jane was first clipped as to her mind by unnecessary cares and duties; also bound down by narrowing privations.

Diana had the pleasure of seeing Grattan's great throbbing eyes melt at Father Ryan's war lyrics, learned in an idle hour; for her horror was constraint to silence; and she would rather be saying poetry aloud all day than nothing at all; hence, the learning of poetry had become a solace to her in the long unsocial days she passed at the Valley Farm. Loughborough nodded approbation. He liked the poetry, but even more the zest which she showed in learning it.

"Learning by heart. I know no better way to keep a mind healthy. The activity refreshes the intellect, warms the heart, nerves the arm, even tugs at the foot, and moves you forward muscularly; makes you more a man or a woman for having used it."

One of the physician's efforts in the Pughtown neighborhood had been to overcome the senseless prejudice existing there against books. How often had he said in such families as the Spanglers, "Books are a man's best friends; their advice is apt to be good, and they do not betray."

"Grattan used to be that fond of his book as a little fellow," threw in Miss Mary Jane, with a feeble at-

tempt to enter into the conversation, "he'd have taken his speller and reader out to the barn and spent the day in and the day out, if mother had let him."

Grat's reply to this was a grunt. He never took any other notice of his sister's comments. As a youth, he had rather liked books, in spite of his calling them women's weapons; but he had always sneaked out of the house when wishing to indulge this taste; his preference having always been the literature of satire, rolled as a morsel under his tongue.

As we have said before, Grat, the youngest-born of the house of Fontaine, had been a rebel from his cradle; his first protest having been against his mother, whom he called "the Pope;" the very wickedest word he could chance upon in the bosom of this highly Methodistical and Quakerish community. He remembered well that, after a protest from him one day, she had cried out, "It's a pity, Hen-e-ry Grattan, that those who taught you to talk did not also teach you to hold your tongue."

"Father-land but mother-tongue," had been the chap's retort, with this addition, "I don't know who taught me how to talk, mother, if it wasn't you; and they all say I take after you mightily."

The last word was generally Grat's, for after some such speech as this he was off to the barn or hay-loft, where he would spend whole days, in the rainy spring or in the sharp fall weather, in order to escape the hard, business-like activity of the women in the house.

The conversation, being illy supported by either Grattan or his sister, was shared between Loughborough and Diana. She glided from poem to poem, strung

upon her memory charmingly like pearls upon a silver wire. "I call them prayers," she said, "and reciting them I call telling my rosary."

"In imagination, you are a Catholic; in heart, a heathen," said Loughborough.

"No; I prefer to be a Catholic in both. Will you be my Father-confessor?"

Loughborough was not ill-suited to such an office. He never sneered at deeds done or words said in sincerity. He did not preach to Diana, and yet he had power to make her feel the frivolity of her ideas, often, as compared with his. It was the contrast which her quick eyes saw that fixed the moral; and true it is that we learn only from those we like. She liked Loughborough very much, she would have said, if asked. He shook his head at the word, Father-confessor.

"How should I be that? I am in no way a Catholic. There would be dangers, too, in such a position. Do you know that you have a strange way, Miss Fontaine, of working upon a man's mind?" He did not say "my mind," for he chose to be strictly impersonal. Why can we not be friends, he said to himself. She needs a counsellor and a friend. She looked up quickly, even blushingly; but Loughborough, sitting in the shadow of the hearth-place, added with the utmost tranquillity,—

"Yes; some women are gifted in this way. What influence you could have with Grattan, if you would."

Diana was conscious of feeling disappointed, and she remained silent. They were now alone, for Miss Mary Jane was in the back kitchen seeing that the yeast was placed in the right temperature, and Grattan was on the

porch. The silence was broken by a sharp bark from Spread Eagle, and the next moment a strange voice asking, outside,—

"Where is Dr. Loughborough?" Immediately the door was thrown open and a village lad stepped in, saying rather excitedly,—

"Dr. Loughborough, you're wanted right off, just as quick as ever you can come. Cap'n McElroy missed the ford at the creek, and the water was high and strong, and he was carried a good ways down the current. Willie Wilson fished him out. He's there at his house, all but gone up the spout, I'm afeard, this time."

Loughborough was on his feet in an instant; he touched his head interrogatively.

The boy nodded, "Yes, sir, as full as a tick, I reckon. He's that rackless when he's sober, but when a man's time has come, it's come, drunk or sober?"

Loughborough went out during the moralizing. Diana heard him exchange a word with Grattan, who offered to accompany him, and then she heard the gate-latch click, and knew that they were gone. "Wretched, wretched man!" thought Diana, sitting alone in the hearth-corner, the cold night-air rushing in through the open door. "How often he talked of his unlucky star. How often I have heard him say 'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at its turn, leads on to fortune.' His commentary always was, 'There's an ebb in my affairs which leads to——' He always left a blank. Is it to be filled up with that cold, vague, dreadful word, death?" thought the girl, with a shudder. "Must so much that is gifted and beautiful come to such an end?" She thought of the sturdy, human-

hearted physician striding along to the death-bed, perhaps thinking only of the other, not himself; of the help he might give, not of the gain he must receive: these thoughts acted like a tonic. "I will go find Aunt Mary and tell her; perhaps we can do something, too," she said to herself, and she rose from her seat and went to the back-kitchen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE religion of a people is the best index to its character. Though the Valley was settled by a band of Scotch Presbyterians, certain of its counties were colonized very early in the century by numbers of Pennsylvania Dutch, who brought with them varieties of the Baptist denomination, such as Hard Shell, Ironside, Dunkard, Campbellite, and New School. This last is the most progressive, while the Dunkard is, perhaps, the least so, according to our modern way of looking at things. These Dunkards—circumscribed, unlettered, frugal, matter-of-fact, unimaginative—clipped the wings of that faith inherited from their more reflective German forefathers, and reduced it to a barn-door fowl,—all for use and not for beauty. Can you conceive of a religion stripped bare of symbolism? Such is the Dunkard's. As the man so is his god, and so also his religion. Or to quote from Voltaire, "If God created man in his own image, man has been returning the compliment ever since."

Dunkard is derived from the word "tunken," to dip,

because they baptize their members three separate times in the name of each person of the Trinity. Their creed is one of harsh restriction, for they refuse heaven to the unbaptized, and they will commune in no edifice but their own. They originated in Pennsylvania in the year 1724; but you will see their square, plain, barnlike meeting-houses scattered through some of the loveliest of the mountain vales that break into deeper curves the uplands of Virginia. As the Dunkard applies literally every Bible incident, his religion is the very consummation of literalism. He believes in the washing of feet, in the eating of the Paschal Lamb; and he greets the brethren, whenever he chances to meet them, with a holy kiss. Diana had frequently seen these quaint-looking men, with their wide-brimmed hats, their sharp-pointed, dove-tailed coats, their pantaloons, home-made, home-dyed, wide at the hips and narrow along the lower limbs, meeting on the village street, facing erect and woodeny, as they imprinted a solemn kiss on each other's lips! At first, she had felt disposed to laugh.

"There is no occasion for you to laugh at them," Grat said; "there are no cleverer people about here than the Dunkards. They mind their own business, and let everybody else's alone."

"Negative praise," was Diana's comment, one Saturday afternoon, as she stood by her uncle in the field. He was gloating in a survey of his stock. A lot of young sheep were rubbing each other in an ecstasy of woolly friction as they strove to get near him and the salt he was offering. Diana patted a gentle-looking ewe, and said,—

"Clever? Do you mean kind or intelligent? I never know exactly what you mean by that word."

"Do you know, Di, it strikes me that you fizzle out a heap on some mighty simple things, considering how smart everybody says you are," was Grat's retort, punishing the stupidity of that mild-faced ewe, Diana had patted, by throwing the remainder of the salt over her head instead of into her mouth. "There's what you get for licking the salt from your lamb's back instead of taking it intelligently out of my pan," said Grat, with a malicious growl, adding, as he laughed at the beast's discomfiture, "Silliness is by no means confined to the sheep, eh?"

"Come, laugh at me over the sheep's head as much as you like, Uncle Grattan. I shall not let you alone. I shall give you no peace until you take me to one of the Dunkard meetings. To-morrow is Sunday; take me to-morrow, won't you?"

"Yes, take you, and have you sitting in the Amen corner laughing at the older women with their babies; the younger ones in their slat bonnets; at Pappy Spitzer or Pappy Funkhauser with their truspasses for trespasses, or annahiliate for annihilate. No; no. I cannot take you around with me. You're one of the sort, Di, that has to be kept in a glass case for fear something might happen."

"Laugh? What are you doing yourself, Uncle Grat? Besides which, you can touch me if I should grow uproarious, as you seem to think I would."

"Touch you? Good Lord, what is the girl thinking of? Why, do you suppose the men and the women sit anywhere near each other in a Dunkard church?

That's the mischief, Di. I should have to sit on one side of the church and look at you on the other, the lines of your face breaking and quivering with laugh. Sometimes, I could swear that the devil's wife, if he had one, looked out of your eyes. I don't mind it sometimes; but then, again, I do. I've had many a favor from those people, and I'd take a licking before I'd be disgraced in a Dunkard church by one of my own kin."

Diana and her uncle walked slowly through the well-nibbled field; they were on their way to look at some calves in the adjoining one.

"What an inconsistent creature you are, Uncle Grat, —sometimes independent, sometimes conventional. If you can't trust to any better principles, why can't you at least rely upon my good-breeding, if I should go to a Dunkard church?"

"Good-breeding!" Grat parodied the word with a demoniac grimace. He dropped it from his lips as a snarling cur might jerk from his teeth the bone he had tussled for. "Good-breeding! Butter on bread to hide sourness, eh? It covers up the damnable hypocrisy of the stuck-up who think themselves better than other folks. I hate the word good-breeding. I despise the people who say it; and I'll be dog-on if you wouldn't be a heap nicer girl, Di, if you could only forget it."

The words were ugly and the tone grating; but the speaker was as superbly handsome a fellow as ever gave salt to sheep or trod the greensward.

"Is it good-breeding that made you oust Vanessa Spangler out of her every-day wits and drive her into a kind of seventh-day rest up there somewhere in Shenandoah?"

"Vanessa Spangler!" cried Diana, in sudden alarm; "is she worse?"

"She was badly enough off last time I saw her," answered Grat, in a provoking spirit of contrariety.

"Pray, don't charge me with the shortcomings of Vanessa Spangler or your friend, Captain McElroy. Dr. Loughborough was generous enough to say that I was not to blame for the consequences of that man's inconstancy, nor Vanessa Spangler's folly." Diana drew herself up with a good deal of dignity, and Grat added,—

"Every one knows that Vanessa is as foolish as the foolishest filly that ever licked a grass blade; but I tell you seriously, Diana, you'll get yourself into trouble if you don't look out. You have a wonderful amount of audacity, and you call it courage."

Diana Fontaine, like many another, had mixed up her imaginary concepts of things with the things themselves. She adored courage and heroism; so she thought that she already possessed these qualities. It is only after the first intoxication of youth has passed that one succeeds in dividing the ideal from the real.

"Who is it?" she asked, with the utmost sauciness and a little ire, "who is it that hates to be lectured, to be dogged, eh, Uncle Grattan?" These words came home with sudden force, and they touched Grat Fontaine's sympathies. To be lectured, had been from babyhood his idea of torment. He softened down to Diana's pat like a great surly bear.

"Have I really been lecturing you?" he asked, relentingly.

"Yes," with a pout. "You are my poor grand-

mother over again. She, I've heard, was harsh, while my grandfather was handsome and genial. You lectured me on my manners, my morals; and, now, I don't know what in heaven's name you *are* driving at."

Grattan stood aghast. He would rather, in his childhood, have been horsewhipped by his father than patted by his mother. She had roused only the surly nature in him; and to be compared—vigorous, independent fellow that he was—to a complaining old lady who had nagged, nagged, nagged, from morning till night, was to him a kind of retribution. He felt in the mood to surrender, and Diana struck in with,—

"To-morrow will be a fine day, from this sunset. Take me to the Dunkard church, will you?"

"You won't like it. You'll get tired; and we'll have to take dinner at the Spitzers', with sauer-kraut; and you'll get dyspepsia," was Grattan's reluctant assent.

"Dyspepsia! I never had it in my life, and never mean to. You have it, you rapacious man, because you eat too fast; and Dr. Loughborough says——"

"Dog-on Loughborough," was Grattan's interruption, flung in as they reached the garden-gate, at which point they separated,—Grattan to go barnwards and give orders to Wesley, Diana to go up-stairs and rearrange her pretty braided knot for tea.

Loughborough had not thought she would laugh at the Dunkards. With that fine tact which he concealed under a rough exterior, he had said to her more than once, "The secret of breadth is to put yourself into other people, not them into you. Do not judge the

world by yourself, but yourself and the world by a universal principle. You are too individual, Miss Fontaine. If you could once get wholly outside of yourself, I think you might give to the world some message which none but you could give, quite as you would give it." And Loughborough's belief in her had added to her mental stature. Her Uncle Grattan was quite mistaken; she did not wish to regard the Dunkards as a comedy, but as a serious reality, from which she, or any one, might learn a lesson.

Diana, it may be seen, was striving to throw off some of those outer layers of belief which were the result of circumstances. Nor was this struggle to do so unbecoming to her. It had deepened what before was too light; it softened what before was too hard. She had worshipped wit and brilliancy, and she was beginning to discover the superiority of wisdom and truth. It was only a beginning, however; for the virtues exist in human nature very spasmodically. It is only willing discipline that makes them constant and gives them rounded being.

Miss Mary Jane objected to Diana's long ride of a Sabbath morning to the Dunkards' church. Her objections roused Grat's resistance; and this, added to the young lady's determination, brought their plan to the climax of success. "It is a beautiful, unforgetable ride," she said, when they had crossed the loops of Sandy Creek for the seventh and last time on Sunday morning, and caught sight of the unpainted, wooden meeting-house, which could not even gain beauty from the lovely hills at its back, on fire, now, with October maples.

At the door, Grat dismounted, and, after helping the girl to spring from her saddle, he led the horses to their long, low shed to be hitched. On entering the church, Diana's eye was caught by a double row of slat-bonneted women on one side and a double row of heavily-bearded men or smooth baby-faced lads on the other. Four elderly men occupied the platform dignified by a pulpit,—these were Pappy Spitzer, Pappy Stover, Pappy Funkhauser, Pappy Eichelberger, and these four pappies, as the preachers are called in Dunkard neighborhoods, were already sitting in a state of expectancy, ready to bless the ears of the congregation with four separate sermons. Diana took her place in a middle pew, and looked around. There were a third more babies than women on the female side, and a great deal of nursing, hushing, soothing, blended with wailing, whining, and downright crying was going forward. The younger men were not without their occupation; there was on their side a good deal of running out to see how the horses were coming on, and a good deal of peering into the slat bonnets which happened to frame the rosiest cheeks and the bluest eyes. A singular effect is produced when the men and women of a congregation wear clothes dyed in the same color; all the coats and gowns here being either dull brown from the juice of boiled walnut hulls, or dingy blue from the tinge bestowed by indigo. It was a coincidence that Diana's dress was also brown and blue; but the brown, how different; the blue, how opposite. The brim of her brown straw hat was just broad enough to hold the breast of a beautiful bird. The clouded blue of her cloth riding-habit showed a rim of blue

and brown feathers fastened together shell-wise around throat and wrist. She still held her riding-whip between gauntleted hands, forgetting that it was an unchurchly weapon. She caught many pairs of eyes fixed upon her with the blank, wondering, or the bovine, pondering gaze of the unintelligent, and returned it with a keen, questioning, direct one of her own. How simple-minded must the men and women be who, on Good Thursday, can, in the open congregation, bare one foot of shoe and stocking in order to have it washed, after the fashion of the disciples at the Last Supper. Yet here in this church, once a year, was this sacrament performed,—the elder brethren washing the men's feet; the elder sisters, the women's. Down the two aisles were carried the wooden pails of mountain-water, and each foot in turn solemnly washed, wiped, and restored, a hallowed member, to its owner.

How comfortable must they be who believe that the church-communicant has reached the state of absolute holiness; even though the non-communicant is supposed still to riot in sin; from this last no religious duty is expected, not even the saying of prayers. Such doctrines as these are set forth at every meeting by the pappies. The eyes of baptized and unbaptized ones, Diana's among them, were fixed upon Pappy Funkhauser, when, in the midst of much coughing on the part of the congregation, he stood up with open lips, not to be closed for an hour. In rustic congregations, coughing seems to act as a spiritual vent. It lets the soul out, which roams about at large. This good man entered into a minute description of God's plan; he told how the Lord saved some people and

punished others in order to show his own glory and power; his God was of a nature congenial with his own, and on intimate terms with him. After his exposition, in which the same idea was repeated many times, he sat down, interclasped his hands over his well-rounded paunch and begin to twirl his thumbs. There was not a furrow on his round, plump face; no mark of care, no expression save one of pleased self-complacency; his head was as bald as a baby's, and was not unlike a baby's, with its blinking eyes, if we except the long, full grayish beard. Diana's eyelids fluttered beseechingly in the direction of her Uncle Grattan; but he took no notice; his arms were folded over his chest, his eyes fixed upon Pappy Stover, who next rose to speak; not a muscle gave evidence of Grat's train of thought. Pappy Stover's sermon was upon temperance, his text being, "The man carrying a pitcher of water." That this man was an adequate illustration of temperance was logically proved; for, "if not, why should the man have carried a pitcher of water? It was not furrin' wine, nor hum-made wine, nor cider, nor (here was the *pièce de résistance*) whuskey, like folkses get from yon still-house nigh unto Pughtown. It was water, water, water," the last water being shouted loud enough to rouse from the dead all men who have ever perished by drowning. The children who had dozed during Pappy Funkhauser's milder oratory now woke up and sung out, thinking, no doubt, that the proper time was arrived for the potation they preferred. A train of mothers was, in consequence, started towards the room adjoining the church, where buckets of spring-water, a cradle or two, and some half-dozen chairs were

conveniences to be found. Pappy Eichelberger's turn came next. He directed his remarks against the young folks and their wickednesses. He found much to say; and Diana, sitting before him in her natty riding-habit, felt that she was the guilty one, and not those round-faced, innocent-looking girls, her neighbors.

Pappy Spitzer was not less spicy than his predecessor; but his philippic was against the devil. He railed at human nature as a whole, and abused the congregation as a part of the nations of the world. Meek, gosling faces were lifted to his with faint awakening interest. He was making them feel, and they were enjoying the excitement of sensation. Spitzer was a blacksmith on week-days, an ecclesiastic on Sabbaths, and his gestures gave evidence that he had acquired by this occupation more brawn than brain. He slapped the Bible, butted the pulpit-cushions, and rang out, with a jeering grin, "Ye-es, you love your chillen. You'd love old Nick if you thought he was kin to you; and the shame is, he *is* kin to you. Throw him off; his arms is about your necks; fling him down; he's a-holdin' on to your coat-tails; beat him away." Spitzer thrashed the book of Holy Writ once more. "I tell you, he's a-rocking the very babies in their cradles;" the mothers present hugged their infants closer at these words; the fathers, sitting in solemn wedge on their side of the meeting-house, looked gently interested, as if they were listening to the exploits of some possum or red fox described by the huntsman himself.

"How they do worship the devil," whispered Diana to her uncle, when they were out of church. "Do you?"

"A convenient scapegoat, Di; a man must have a vent."

Before Diana could reply to the accusation that she had been sitting in a rogue's paradise all the morning, and that she had looked proportionately naughty, she felt her hands seized, and, looking up, beheld Miss Sarah Jane Jackson in front of her.

"Well, honey, if here ain't a sight good for sore eyes. Dianny, as peart and sassy as a little F. F. V. But let me say '*howdy*' to the leftenant. What brung you all this way, Leftenant Fontaine? I never met up with *you* at a Dunkard meeting-house before."

The sole answer being a shrug, the nervous creature chattered on to hide an embarrassment which brought the purple of a frost-bitten rose into the sallow skin of her high cheek-bones.

"Be you going to Funkhauser's to-dinner? Yes? I be, too. You'll get good eating there (in a loud whisper), unless, perhaps, the sauer-kraut——Did you ever taste sauer-kraut, Dianny?" then, with a flighty change of theme, she added, "Don't you love to hear Pappy Spitzer talk? He has tongue enough."

"Cheek! Don't you think so?" threw in Grat, turning, for the first time, towards the lady walking along beside them. Miss Sarah Jane applauded his wit with a boisterous laugh, and thanked him, for notice, with her eyes. The Funkhauser homestead was close to the church; a few yards of road brought them to its whitewashed gate, which clicked under Grat's hand. They walked up a little path bordered by a row of sycamore trees, whitewashed to the trunk, a match for the whitewashed palings. In the garden,

flowers were out of bloom, saving a few sturdy chrysanthemums that showed their yellow, aromatic buttons in the midst of parterres edged around with whitewashed stones; the two largest beds in this prim enclosure were ornamented by a cluster of excessively large shells. The farther inland you go, the more do you find the country-people prizing these curiosities brought from the coast. The shell delivers to them a message from that great, wild, wide ocean of which they have heard, but which, perhaps, they have never seen. On the porch stood Mrs. Funkhauser, her daughter Barbara, Mr. and Mrs. Spangler. Mrs. Spangler was Mrs. Funkhauser's sister, and she was talking energetically as the visitors approached. She appeared to be taking up Pappy Spitzer's philippic where he had left it, her speech, just now, being directed against the members of her family. It was well known that she was a woman with powder and shot in her disposition, and after working off the explosives she usually sat down relieved.

Conjugal discourse presented few surprises to this worthy couple. Her husband was wont to say, "I can set on the front po'ch and talk with my old ooman, and she happen to be fifty mile up the Valley; or in the back kitchen, or up to the meetin'-house, just as it may chance." Abuse being a luxury, Loughborough had once said, slyly, when called in to prescribe for her neuralgia, "Well, madam, who's to blame this time? The more the merrier, you know. Fire away. I like to give my patients that which relieves them quickest."

"All the preachers get outen me, they kin put in they eye," proclaimed this lady's husband; for though most people boast of liberality, some do of niggardli-

ness, and Spangler was one of these. His lady's cue was dissent, of course.

"*He's* that close-fisted," she threw in with superb scorn, pointing a long bony finger at her liege lord, "he's that close-fisted, Sister Spitzer, so as I have to pay towards the meetin'-house fund down to Pughtown outen my butter-money and hen-money. I pay ev'ry dog-on rade cent, eat me ef I do'ent."

Mrs. Spangler being a woman of spirit, and having, moreover, the woman's faculty for nagging, now undid her solferino bonnet-strings and gazed her husband into his habitual attitude of hopeless stolidity. Into this conversation the three newcomers broke with a softening influence.

Greetings were exchanged. Diana's feather-trimmed riding-habit was surveyed by the ladies with interest. She was a bird-of-paradise suddenly walking in upon a flock of barn-door fowls. What immeasurable distances can the dressmaker create between creatures of the same species. The woman with clumsy darts gazes upon the woman with daintily curved and taper ones as upon a visitor from another sphere. Meanwhile, Miss Sarah Jane besieged Grat, and talked herself out of breath, in the belief that she was beginning at last to make an impression upon him. He sank down upon one of the green-painted porch benches, hoping that something might happen which would give him the chance of escape. With all her good humor, Miss Sarah Jane's lack of insight was pathetic; a sad thing it is for a human being to have bubbling within him the enthusiasm which, instead of kindling, kills the ardor of others.

"The capting will be as pleased as pie to see you, Miss Diany," said Mrs. Funkhauser, who never in her life detected the possibility of a blunder until after she had made it. She regretted this speech immediately, for she was snapped up by her sister, who said, pettishly,—

"'Pears to me like you're the queerest 'ooman, Mary Love, to be a aunt I ever did see. I shouldn't a' thought Miss Dianny would be so keen to set eyes on Capting McElroy after what has took place."

"Captain McElroy! Is he here? Why, I thought him ill at your house, Mrs. Spangler," answered Diana, surprised.

"Do you mean to say, in real earnest, that the capting's movements are unbeknown to you, Miss Dianny?"

Mrs. Spangler was capable of satire, and as she had now the appearance of being ready to say more, the two ladies included in her disdain took flight into the house in order to avoid hearing it.

Barbara followed, and began to dismember Diana of hat, gloves, and riding-whip, while the mistress of the house opened a back door and vanished in the midst of a strong smell of sauer-kraut.

"No, thanks; I will not go up-stairs, now," was Diana's answer to Miss Barbara's invitation that they should go to the best bedroom; so Miss Funkhauser went off alone, smoothing with her hand the bird-breast on Diana's hat; and the latter turned towards the parlor, hoping to find therein a refuge from Mrs. Spangler's stormy tongue. This room was enveloped in a jail-like obscurity, so that at first she perceived

nothing but the pieces of furniture, which seemed only to be darker spots on a dark space. She soon discerned, however, a figure stretched at full length on a black horse-hair sofa between the two windows. The eye, quickly adjusting itself to the shadowed room, told her, the next instant, that this was the figure of McElroy. Hog Creek, it has been already seen, had not bestowed death upon him; for, by a strange contrariety of nature, men like McElroy do not die early; they drag along throughout an entire lifetime,—a living body, a dying mind, a dead will. Diana stood still. McElroy roused slightly, leaned his elbow upon the sofa-cushions, supported his head upon his hands, looked at her and smiled. The apathy forsook his countenance; something of his old dreamy self flickered under his heavy lids. Alas! this smile was more pitiable than the apathy had been. It brought no response to Diana's lip. It was the struggle betwixt mind and body; the mind was beginning slowly to assert itself and perceive its own shame. It was the weirdest, wannest, saddest smile that can visit the human face. It was hopelessness punished by the memory of brighter and happier times. Diana was touched by it to nothing warmer than pity. She realized, now, that spurs, sash, and cavalry-boots do not make the man. Yet, what does? Then the figure of Loughborough presented itself to her imagination, making dreaminess and grace appear abject and mean beside his uncouth, perhaps, yet unyielding masculinity.

The thought of Loughborough flooded her with a kind of hopeful energy. She felt the desire which

womanly women have, that of cherishing something weaker than themselves. The impulse came upon her to lay her hand upon the head of the shipwrecked man, and say, "Strive," or to touch his limp fingers and whisper, "Struggle against your demon; and, in struggling, be of good cheer; salvation is for him who struggles;" but she restrained herself, pitying, in silence, the ragged hat, the uniform frayed at the seams, framing so much recklessness.

"I am glad to see you better," she said at last, just the least bit embarrassed.

"Better! Do you call this better?" was McElroy's answer, as, still smiling that weird smile, he spread his hand before her, that her eyes might dwell upon its sickly transparency. Diana murmured something about first steps in convalescence.

"Loughborough would have me come. Chalybeate and sulphur springs here, you know, out in the grove. Did they point them out as you rode up?" He made a gesture, half weariness, half interest, for McElroy could be polite even when half gone in an opium dream. "So the Funkhausers brought me bodily, whether I would or not, in the spring-wagon." Then, with a sudden compulsion, he interrupted his rambling speech to say, "But I forget, Miss Diana; you are standing. Do sit down. Yes, that arm-chair is a comfortable one. I often sit in it; they spoil me here terribly, Barbara and all."

The speaker smiled again his languid, cheerless smile; but it died away, this time, almost instantaneously. Diana sat down as requested. She forgot that she had been tired a few minutes ago. Her face and

form were so full of energy, a quality which McElroy lacked, that he seemed to derive a ghastly kind of pleasure in surveying her.

"You will excuse me for not getting up from this abominably uncomfortable sofa; but, you see, I'm such an invalid. Everybody excuses me, Miss Diana; you must, too."

She leaned forward, as she answered in her challenging way, "But if I do not excuse you, to excuse is to accuse. Do you remember the proverb?"

McElroy shook his head. A woman's service was still sweet, but her challenge no more to him than an antiquated weapon to a modern field-officer.

"Everybody will have to excuse me from this time on forever."

"You are not going to make yourself a walking apology forever, Captain McElroy? You have been an enemy to yourself; you have suffered on account of it. You have been ill; you will get well, and be happy again."

"Happy!" ejaculated McElroy, with more animation than he had yet shown. "I have never been so happy in my life as I am now."

"Do you call playing with your conscience and singing it to sleep, happy?" Diana's pity changed to a scorn that lifted every feature of her face, and her figure, too, into noble surprise. McElroy stayed quiet for a while, neither her words nor her look taking effect at once. He was growing obtuse, so the sting was gradual. As soon as he realized the full import of what she had said, he felt a tremor go through him. He stirred from his pillows, half rose, rose wholly,

then sat down again on the sofa, but in an upright position.

"I believe," he said, in a shaking voice, "I believe, Diana Fontaine, that you almost have the power to make me miserable again."

What a terrible expression is that which shows apathy and energy struggling in the same bosom, with the odds in favor of apathy. Diana sprang up from her chair with the words, "Would to heaven that I had the power to make you wholly miserable. In that misery lies your safety. Oh, Captain McElroy, throw away from you the wretched happiness which cheats you with a name, but is not happiness; it is the real misery."

Diana plead; she was lovely in her pleading, and her eyes were full of tears. A long, deep, struggling sigh went through McElroy's enfeebled frame; it was one of the throes of his moral and physical nature. Sitting upright, his ghastliness appalled. What that sigh preluded Diana never knew; for Barbara Funkhauser walked in the parlor, now, with heavy tread and wondering eyes.

"Well, I think in my heart! ef you ain't setting up, capting. Dear heart, but you hadn't ought to be, 'deed you hadn't. You look all turned round, and you saying you was so happy all the morning. Lie down, capting, lie down, do." This was a long speech for Barbara Funkhauser. Diana felt that *her* hands and tongue were now tied. She moved to the window and peered through the half-closed shutters at the scrubby chrysanthemum bushes in the garden, at the group of people enjoying the mid-day sunlight pleasantly upon

the porch. Her sensitive nostrils took in the all-pervading odor of sauer-kraut; it mingled with her discouragement and sickened body as well as mind. She felt a loathing for food, a shrinking from social chatter, a longing to be far away from the human and his horrors, away in the depths of some wholesome solitude, where the pine flings its pure scent upon the air, and where the elements of Nature forever struggle and forever conquer.

When she turned to see what McElroy was doing, she perceived that already he had succumbed to Barbara Funkhauser's eloquent attentions. He had fallen back among his cushions, and was gazing, half-troubled, half-comforted, upon the Hessian girl who knelt at his side measuring in a spoon drops from a bottle. Yes, it is plain, she thought. Loughborough was right. This man will go on to the end a craven, afraid to meet life, eating his opium, enslaving his woman minions, and with this thought she glided unobserved from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

WINTER in the country is but a poor time for visiting, as knitting, darning, patching, with a thousand lesser duties, eat up the short day. The housewives in Pughtown and its neighborhood, huddled in worsted shoulder-capes, kept their chapped hands busy with such work as this, or with thawing the milk in the cold mornings, and in covering with newspapers their potted

geraniums, in the sharp evenings, to protect their darlings from the frost that came like a thief in the night. They were glad to hug their firesides, not venturing out, except once in a great while to church. At the break of spring Loughborough and Lou-i-sy were to be married, so the latter, of course, was now absorbed in quiet but happy preparation.

Married! This word led Diana to the brink of a precipice over which she looked into a kind of terrifying darkness. Even Grattan was away; so the suspension of those little contentions and reconciliations which enlivened the friendship of uncle and niece made the monotony of her winter at the Valley Farm seem yet drearier. She would have been thankful for a glimpse of Algy Schwartz' bluntly honest features; but he, happy fellow, was in Texas, hundreds of miles away from miserable Pughtown. Even McElroy, so low in spirits had Diana come, that she would have been willing to warm her dreary winter-day in the light of his splendid smile; but he was occupying another school-house in a neighboring county, alternating the serene negation of an opium dream with the exhilaration produced by home-made apple-brandy.

Diana consequently was left to the depressing companionship of her aunt. At first she bore the circumscribed life bravely, but after a while she began to droop. She could not hinder her thoughts from flying to Loughborough. She read every number of the Godey's "Lady's Book" stacked up in the parlor; plunged into Fox's "Book of Martyrs;" even read Mrs. Edwards' "Conversations on Chemistry," and Jay's "Sermons," but all this merely constituted grada-

tions of dreariness. She went to bed with the name of Loughborough half-breathed upon her lips; she awoke with the image of him—stalwart, serious, yet kind—in her vision. "It is natural," she explained to herself, with that subtle fallaciousness for which Loughborough himself had often laughed at her,—"it is natural that I should think of him. He is the only real friend I have here; the others are shadows,—my aunt a ghost that forebodes, usually, evil; McElroy, an illusion that mocks; Loughborough is a reality,—a man. Why does he not drop in of an evening, as he used to do? Is he always, all the time, at the Fawny-stawks?" His absence vexed her; though, had she reflected, she would have realized that it implied more real interest than even his presence could have done; surely, it meant something,—what? "I wish that I could fall ill, then he would have to come professionally," but she did not fall ill; monotony did not disagree with her body; and the long tramps she took through snow and slush braced her strong young frame. These tramps, however, met with resistance from Miss Mary Jane, who said one snowy day, as the two sat by the fire,—

"I would not go about so much by myself, if I was you, honey; the folks talk down at Pughtown."

"Talk? let them," was Diana's reply; "besides which, Aunt Mary, I get so tired of sitting. You know I have been accustomed all my life to walking or dancing or skating, to violent exercise. Did you stay quietly all the time in this little sitting-room when you were my age?"

Aunt and niece glanced at each other, Diana wonder-

ing whether her life would ever be painted in dull, gray monochrome like Miss Mary Jane's; and she began to fear it would.

"We never went about in my day, honey, unless we had something very particular to go for."

Miss Fontaine the elder, the presiding spirit of stagnation, sank her gaze into the sock she was knitting for rough, rebellious Grat; Miss Fontaine the younger sank hers into the dull red embers in the hearth-place. There was but little cheer in the picture thus presented; the brick-work was cracked and blackened by accumulations of soot; the charred logs, lying criss-cross upon the andirons, gave a sullenly-red glower. The two ladies sighed,—one with a wailing cadence, from years of continuous discouragement; the other, with an impatient restlessness that rebelled *against* discouragement.

Diana hardly realized that her aunt's youth had been spent in a jail where one will alone reigned supreme, that one her grandmother's. Old Mrs. Fontaine had been a fast worker and a fast talker in her day. She could scold her children, reprove her servants, as well as keep herself and all of them busy, at the same time. Labors at the Valley Farm were co-operative in Miss Mary Jane's youth; and Mrs. Fontaine, sitting in the lee of the sideboard, knitted and gave orders. Her daughters, ranged around her, allowed their minds to wander, under the restless zeal of the maternal tongue, while their hands pieced together strips for a rag-carpet; the younger children being set to rubbing the brass knobs of the sideboard, and the little darkies to winding yarn. Every few minutes a colored woman

would step in from the quilting-room to get an order, or from the kitchen with a sample of mince-meat or other mess, which last was tested with minute care, passed around the circle, and appraised. When Mrs. Fontaine found no opportunity for scolding, her wisdom overflowed in saws; in this way animadverting upon the discontent visible on her daughters' faces. Grat and his brothers found in the hayloft their vent; but the girls had none, and there was a burning of the inward fires, until finally their light went out and discontent was replaced by a dull resignation.

"So you're keen to get away from home, are you, Mary Jane?" Mrs. Fontaine would say. "Why, I don't know, *they* say, who know, that if an ass goes a travelling, he'll never come back a horse;" or to the prettiest of her girls, Martha Alice, "I counsel you not to be too dainty, Marthy Alice. Silks and satins put out the kitchen fire, and a woman that loves to be at the window is like a bunch of grapes on the highway;" or to one of the elder sons, "Have a care, William Henery, how you mix yourself up with that young man at the still-house; if you play with a fool at home, he'll play with you abroad. You say he's clever? My father used to tell how every ass thinks himself worthy to stand with the king's horses." Of her husband, a hot-headed, generous-handed old Democrat, this hard-fisted, sententious dame would say, by way of rebuking the sudden outburst of liberality, "the head gray, and no brains yet, eh?"

None of these, not even Billy, answered the lady back. Mistress she was, and the last word she would have; she believed in a maxim as in a Bible verse.

To her, God was a provider; the angels, house-holders; and man the outcome of a rampant utilitarianism. The good lady was now dust, but her spirit had left its impress.

Miss Mary Jane's soul was too far gone in sleep to be roused; her niece, however, lashed herself with strong sensations and beat her wings against the bars of the cage. After a slice of dried-apple pie eaten for dinner, she mounted to the attic, and there sat down between two heaps of walnuts. She must have an outlet of some kind, and she found it in a sonnet addressed to Lou-i-sy. It was full of some pleasing compound words, such as vestal-whiteness, dove-softness, and Diana pronounced it choice. After reading the sonnet, she resharpened her pencil, and tried something in the ballad style, which she called, "Recollections," and which she intended to be pathetic:

Dear, my friend, do you remember
  Those beechen woods we sauntered through,
Yellowed by a sad September,
  'Neath Virginia's Ridge of Blue?

And do you mind my girlish prattle,
  Like the chatt'ring run, you said,
Winding round its meadowed cattle,
  Chafing 'gainst its rocky bed?

The years have slain that sportive maiden,
  Yet her spirit walks earth's shores,—
A spirit galled and sorrow-laden
  Haunts the homestead's steps and doors.

Asks what the years have ta'en from thee?
  Oh, friend, these years, these cruel years;
They slew our love! they made joy flee;
  They took the smiles; they left the tears.

Diana received some pleasure from swimming through the waves of poetry, though she had some trouble with her rhymes and a good deal with her feet; but in the glow produced by composition, critic, of course, melted into rhapsodist.

"What miserable machinery is necessary for representing these pictures made within the mind," she said to herself, turning over numerous little bits of paper, consecrated, this one to an "Ode on Friendship," in which Sir Launce played the *rôle* of ideal friend; that one to "The Rhyme of Reason," in which love was represented as a selfish end in life, and reason the ultimate aim of existence; so on, *ad libitum*. Yes, what an infinite amount of drudgery is needed to touch the springs of thought,—ink, pen; she touched hers wearily; two hours of work, such as it was, produced reaction.

The hand requires days for what the mind can do in an instant. Between the author's concept of his idea and the reader's conception of that concept stands a dark line uniting two luminous points. "Ah! how delightful," she thought, "that through little dark symbols spirit may live in the world even when body is dust. You little black imps" (apostrophizing her work), "an angel hovers over each one of you."

Diana, as has been said before, had a lively imagination, for which she had been much laughed at by her Pughtown relatives. But Loughborough had said to her more than once, "Do not be ashamed of it, Miss Diana; it is a mark of especial favor set upon you by the gods." Loughborough was so generous; no, not generous, but just. Justice is, after all, a very fine

generosity; and justice, generosity, mercy, are only different words for Truth.

Twilight comes before its time in low-raftered attics; it soon grew dismally cold, and Diana's fingers were cramped. She ran down the blue-painted steps to her aunt's bedroom, down the next flight, then stopped, with her hand on the latch, surprised by voices. It was not Wesley's voice. She opened the door, tremblingly, and her gaze fell upon Loughborough, seated in one of the deal-chairs, talking with her aunt. He had heard the coming step, so he rose immediately, advanced, held out his hand, and their eyes met.

Again and again, in the past two months, Diana had consecrated herself to friendship; but she had mistaken her own heart; and, when surprised, women's emotions overflow more readily than men's. In that one glance exchanged between the two, as they stood close to each other in the dingy sitting-room, Loughborough saw that the fires upon her inward altar were lit, and, alas! for him. It was only a glance betwixt double fringes, but it was a bid to him to come and be her heart's guest. Oh, tell-tale eyes! The lips may keep the firm line given by self-control, but the soul will not be caught in bonds. It struggles, it pants for freedom; and what is its freedom?—to merge in the life of another?

The sudden realization of his suspicions troubled Loughborough. He had kept away from the Valley Farm just because he knew that he could not go there without being drawn into a deeper and more delicious life than ever Lou-i-sy had kindled within him. To break the spell, he kept away. But now here was

another beside himself concerned. What was his duty? His duty, ordinarily, was to heal. He could heal now; and yet he must refrain? The problem filled his countenance with gloom; made his hand fall away heavily from Diana's, and made him sit down again in the deal-chair, oppressed with thoughtfulness and silence. Diana, not knowing what message had flown forth from her, sat down also, constrained, and yet conscious of a transformation in everything around her. Aunt Mary looked no longer dejected, but pleasantly subdued; the fire was no longer a half-extinguished flame, but a constellation of warmth and brilliancy. The sitting-room was no longer dingy, but steeped in a kind of soft sobriety; all this being the framework for a feeling of ecstasy which sprang up within her, which flew from her, lit upon each object like a glorious cherub of immortal freshness.

"Why have you been so long coming? Aunt Mary and I thought you were never coming to see us again. We thought we must have offended you."

Diana tried not to seem *too* much pleased with her visitor, so she said "we," though Aunt Mary was a passive party to that "*we*." But Diana, it must be remembered, was a generous person with her feelings.

"Offended? I do not get offended easily, Miss Fontaine. I take it that the fellow who is always getting offended is, in himself, a very offensive personage."

How delightfully like Loughborough this speech sounded. It seemed like another arrival of his spirit, and Diana greeted it with a smile. Truly, there was a fascination in her proximity. Loughborough wondered whether it was his duty to surrender himself to it or

not. Of what use wondering; of what use duty; there is something higher than duty. A sweet and subtle intimacy bound the two with invisible threads.

"How have you been getting along, lately?" asked Loughborough, rather tritely, but thinking, in his kindly altruism, much more of his companion than of himself.

"I have been all but dead,—now alive." She spoke in a low voice, and Loughborough, in a half-whisper added, "Poor child, I knew you must be lonely, but how could it be helped?" Then aloud, "Come for a sleigh-ride with me, will you? It is not too cold. Do you think so, Miss Mary Jane?" Loughborough turned towards the elder lady, then to Diana with the repeated "Will you?"

Her answer was a motion as quick as the deer's towards the staircase. She was greedy of every moment lost. The eagerness of young creatures longing for life's fullness is pathetic. Had any one told Loughborough that, on his trumping up an excuse to go to the Valley Farm that afternoon, he should also ask Diana Fontaine to ride with him, he would have flouted the assertion.

Yet here he was stepping into his sleigh after Diana, shaking the reins, and feeling his horse first quiver into motion, then trip swiftly along over the packed snow of the lane as airily as a girl. In the opalescent sheen of the snow-covered high-road that swept before them, straight and white, he had eyes for his companion. Joy's rose-hued banner waved across her cheek and turned its usual dark, though healthful, paleness into a vivid glow. The little white scar under her lip, a

familiar mark, melted now into deepened flesh-tints. Hers was not the merry-faced joy of a girl anticipating a frolic; but the joy of a heart that, having been depressed, now trembles with too much exaltation; at such a time, tears are not far off.

"How lonely you must have been!" cried Loughborough, involuntarily. He was too deep a reader of human nature not to observe the signs of the human countenance and to consider what they signified. He knew that one of the weaknesses as well as one of the charms of this young girl was her dependence upon sympathy.

"Yes, but not now." To youth, memory is a dwarf; anticipation, a giant; in age, the case is reversed. "I am intensely happy now."

Her nostrils vibrated gently to take in the air. A multitude of expressions drifted across her face, a multitude of possibilities thrilled within her bosom. Diana overflowed with promises; would she keep any of them? Certain people impress you with wonder, surprise, doubt, expectation. Diana was one of these. For this moment, however, she and the tripping mare were as happy as two young animals could be. Loughborough was not. Passionately a doctor, he was divinely a man; and, to his far-reaching mind, the present moment did not suffice. The present should be the entrance to the future; but just now the avenue of the present did not appear to lead forward to the future he desired.

"Impossible for you to know how often I have thought of you alone at the Valley Farm."

"But you did not come?"

Diana turned toward him. He did not answer, but kept his head resolutely bent away from her. He looked at the bevelled edges of the snow, deep-piled upon the banks between which they flew along,—now straight, now taking a bend in the road, with utmost speed; and still he was entirely conscious of those beseeching eyes.

"And I; how often have I thought of you too."

Diana believed she was using the candor of friendship; but are the beseeching glance and the yearning voice to be measured by that standard? Still, Loughborough did not answer, and Diana pursued recklessly.

"It was you who made Pughtown endurable to me, Dr. Loughborough. You opened my eyes to what is patriotic, human, in the people about me. Do you not know that I feel within me a richer Diana than the one you first knew? Then why did you leave your work half-finished? Why did you never come? Do you know it is nearly two months since we have met? then by accident."

Here was an appeal which could no longer be resisted. Friendship was unmasked, the familiar features of Love were now too plainly visible. Loughborough was quickened to speech.

"How could I come?" he cried, "when to come was treason; when to come was the degradation of love into treachery. Yes, love; that is it. I have made you know now, Diana, what I myself was only in part aware of."

You would have thought that Loughborough was making a confession of crime, he spoke so grimly, instead of a declaration of love. On flew the happy

mare westward; the clouds were piled in the sky very much as the snow was piled upon the earth,—one seemed sister to the other. On the western horizon, the great opal-colored heaven brightened into dull pink. Besides Loughborough, only the few Gothic-pointed firs that marked North Bend could overhear Diana as she echoed the word, "Love;" and then she added, with open directness,—

"Yes, we both felt it. We had to know it. What one feels, one knows. Love me for this hour."

"If I love you for an hour, I swear I shall not stop short of eternity, Diana. Do you understand?"

The cords of self-restraint were snapped. There was no more grimness. Resolution changed its color from white to deepest rose. Diana had seen Loughborough kind and genial, but she had never before realized how he would look when voluntarily loving. He leaned towards her; her eyes leaped to his, but were struck back by the light in his. They sank wounded behind lids against which they beat like frightened birds. If sight had been snatched from her then, she could never forget that look. It was enough to feed on forever. It is not to be contained in an epithet; for it was the touch of spirits,—a revelation, an ascension, a transfiguration. She realized, trembling in the dark of closed lids, what heaven is, the soul, eternity. He laid his great fur-mittened hand over her two, which were clasped under the buffalo-robe.

"Say quickly; is it now and forever?" But Diana, womanlike, having gained her point, drew back.

"You startle me," she whispered. "Forever? That

takes away my breath. Let me think." Then she murmured, "Lou-i-sy."

This name was no longer a check to Loughborough, he having once overleaped the barrier. With Diana, it was otherwise. She had tempted him to overspring the mark honor had set for him. Then Love, fairly roused and recognized, instead of putting conscience to sleep, waked it up. Together they had tasted the sweets of rebellion. She felt happy, satisfied, exalted. She shook her head, murmuring again, regretfully, as a caution against their passion, the name "Lou-i-sy."

Loughborough moved impatiently. "I should grieve to pain that good soul," he cried; "but false I will not be to her. Marriage, now, with her would be treason. It is you I love, Diana."

"Pain her? You shall not, Launce."

Diana's voice played about the name of the man she loved, making music in the ears of both. Up to this time, in their intercourse, she had been the obeying principle; now, however, since Love had spoken and answered, she felt strong with the strength of two, strong enough for sacrifice.

"No; you shall not pain that pure soul through me," she repeated.

"But, Diana, is there under heaven a pain like unanswered love? Should I condemn Lou-i-sy to that, it is false honor you condemn me to."

"Think yourself back to the time before I came. Were you not happy then? If not, you were at least serene. You are engaged to a woman who adores you. She nursed you to life. You are hers by gratitude."

"I did obey gratitude until I knew what love was;

now I obey the master. It is too late to plead for Lou-i-sy, now. I myself plead for her during these last two months; for then I was not quite certain what was love, what passion."

Diana interrupted, with "Ah, but I know what is love; what passion." Her pride tapered to exquisite gentleness. "Don't you see, Launce, it is because I do love,—no passion,—that I am willing, determined, to resign you."

"How can we unsay what we have said? My love is not worth the having, if it is for an hour. Put away the woman's fancies. You, yourself, asked me for an hour's love. I offer you an eternity's." He thought her perverse.

"Do you know, Dr. Loughborough," she began, solemnly, "that Lou-i-sy would die if she lost you? even if she doubted you? She is one of the women to pine away with a broken heart. Did you not tell me this much of the inelastic Hessian nature? No; I have had my lesson. I——"

"You would find a hundred consolations," answered Loughborough, attending to that part of Diana's remark which referred to herself.

"You wilfully misunderstand me." Her tone and manner implied rebuke. Loughborough wondered at her, wonder sublimed to reverence; by this she felt kindled to the pitch of heroism that could have swung her over a precipice into the chasm beneath.

"Lou-i-sy has her heroism, I have mine. Mine involves moral courage. I accept the love which you gave me for an hour,—no more; forever after, friendship; nothing less than friendship."

Diana had a vision of Loughborough being her partner in the heavenward, not in the earthward, flight. She was strung up as if fed on wine.

"Yes, I will help you to stand up to that promise you made years ago to the woman you are expecting to marry in a few weeks. There, do you understand me, now?"

But Loughborough's understanding had to be helped out by a sublimity of expression which shot across her whole person and gathered her away from him as in a white cloud. There are times when the most submissive woman exercises supreme dominion; this moment was hers. He cried out, "Diana, beloved, be mine; my wife. Ours only is the true marriage."

But this was not the time for urging. Diana motioned him from her with a determined arm, her countenance whitened, not reddened, by its purified flame, her voice thrilling with resolve. "Never. Lou-i-sy has her love, and *that* only; we have, you and I, *our* love,—and something else. No; it may be a mistake, but I will not ruin a helpless soul. I *will* be strong. Take me home, quick, Dr. Loughborough."

Diana buried her face in her hands, while Loughborough, in silence, turned the horses' heads and guided them forward on the smooth, white, hard track towards the Valley Farm.

CHAPTER XVI.

Miss Rebecca Fawnystawk was given to fits of self-depreciation, which was another way of depreciating somebody else. She made of herself a scape-goat upon which to vent her disapprobation of the rest of the world. We can afford to be suspicious of virtue when excessive, it is merely another name for the opposite vice. Character is the subtlest and finest kind of architecture, and the laws of proportion hold nowhere more rigorously than in the building up of it.

"Lou-i-sy," said Miss Rebecca Fawnystawk, one morning, as the two ladies sat sewing behind the splendid mass of geraniums at the dining-room window, "how come the doctor hasn't turned up of late? Where have he been a-keepin' of himself?"

Lou-i-sy did not look up from the bit of white muslin she was laying in minute plaits, as she answered, "He's busy, Cousin 'Becca."

"'Pears to me he's most too busy for a man as is to be married a week come next Monday."

Miss Fawnystawk's lips were pinched together, as if an immense pressure of words lay behind them.

"I know how busy we be, Cousin 'Becca; and a man has a heap more things to look after than a woman." Lou-i-sy's needle flew along the line of the plaits like a silver streak.

"Yes, a lick too many, I should say, when he's two women to look after instead o' one."

Miss Rebecca's tongue had been itching to get these words said for a good while; now, that they were out, her nerves relaxed from their tension.

"Cousin 'Becca, what do you mean?"

Lou-i-sy's hands lay idle in the plaits, and she lifted a face drawn into puzzled lines.

"Anybody could see it, considerin' it's as plain as the nose on your face. Only you, Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk, you've got yours into your teapots and your patty-pans,—everything 'ceptin' what's going on around you."

"It—what, Cousin 'Becca?"

In Lou-i-sy's eyes of soft blue there was a compulsion which Miss Rebecca dared not resist.

"It? Why, it's as plain as pie-crust that the doctor's a-hangin' around that girl over at Fontainses. You may call her cousin, but she's no kin on the Fawnystawk side, I'm proud to say. And she's no cousin worthy to mention, neither, ef she can have the man as is going to marry you a week come next Monday tied to her apron-string."

"Are you talkin' about Diany, Cousin 'Becca?"

"Who else but she, I'd like to know, 'ud have the cheek to be settin' up first to Capting McElroy, then to Dr. Loughborough?"

"Where did you hear all this yarn, Cousin 'Becca?"

"Why, Pughtown's agog with it, and Susan Alice Spangler is outdone. She says that there'll be no chance for the girls as is born and bred in the neighborhood to get a husband until they get shet of that sassy critcher."

"Cousin 'Becca," answered Lou-i-sy, after a pause

and making a huge effort to be calm, shown by red color on her white throat and blue swollen veins on her temples. Such blueness of veins ! they might have been fed by the inward fountain that shed such violet into her widely-opened, dismayed eyes,—"Cousin 'Becca, you had ought to be ashamed to listen to such as Miss Spangler. Many's the times I've heard you say she had more tongue than was good for her."

Lou-i-sy's eloquence was not that of language; but she had an eloquence of body, a chaste blush, a virtuous scorn of expression, to which no onlooker could be insensible. Miss Rebecca murmured something about duty, to which her niece replied, drawing up her plump figure with much dignity, "Duty? Well, mine is plain; and I'll hear no one who has aught to say against the doctor; no, not if it is my own flesh and blood as says it."

When Dr. Fawnystawk came in to dinner after his professional rounds, he cried out, a little snappishly, seeing his daughter bowed down over a lapful of needle-work, "Well, young 'ooman, how's the weddin'-gown?"

"Finished, pappy, all but the collar and cuffs and sewing of the waist to the skirt."

The voice was not without a chirrup of satisfaction in it which irritated Dr. Fawnystawk. "Well, you'd better leave it whar it stands, or turn it into a keepsake, or somethin' of that sort; for, 'cordin' to Susan Alice Spangler and them as says they know, you'll not have use for it."

"Pappy, I'll thank you to listen to no harm of Dr. Loughborough; and I'll take it kindly if you'll

say nothing about my marriage with him, unless it'll be to give me your blessing when the time comes."

Lou-i-sy laid her hand upon the chair which presided over the dumplings, now steaming forth savory, peace-making influences from a platter at the head of the table. It was wonderful how much flint could get into that serene eye, and how much intention could pierce by means of that gentle voice. Dr. Fawnystawk darted an acute look from under his gray, furzy eyebrows. He knew stubbornness, and that it was a birthright bequeathed by himself to his child.

"Come, sit down, sit down," he answered, soothingly; "don't get your back up, Lou-i-sy, 'ooman. The Lord knows I want you to get married in the biggest hurry ever you can. I wish it was to-morrow 'stead of a week come next Monday. I'm a-lookin' forrard to my Sabbath day when the doctor gets his buggy hitched up for good in our barn. Lord, child, I'm pleased as pie, 'ceptin' for his runnin' down of the calomel. But you can't have everything to suit; and many a man 'll have to get to heaven before he knows the good there is in calomel."

Dr. Fawnystawk kept up a running commentary upon calomel during the meal. When it was over and everything put in order, Lou-i-sy returned to her wedding-gown, nor stopped until it was completed. At dusk she carried it to the guest-chamber, laid it down upon the counterpane of the four-poster bed, folded together the sleeves in a beautiful white embrace, pulled out the lace edging, smoothed down the tucks, stood back an instant in reverential homage before this symbol of so much heart's joy, then threw over it a

fair large sheet, and, going on tip-toe out of the chamber, left it to its white solitude.

That evening Loughborough came. Lou-i-sy, sitting alone in the parlor, heard him fasten his horse to the block, unlatch the gate, and walk up the porch-steps. Her sense of hearing was acuter than usual, and there was an unwonted dilation in her eyes. The physician's glance would have diagnosed her as nervous this evening; the lover's glance would have perceived the very rapture of love and reverence in her countenance. There are times when one realizes the inward fires more clearly than at others; manifestations of the finer parts of one's nature are unequal. To Lou-i-sy, this was the real wedding-day. She felt the sense of ownership and of oneness with him in its fullest force. As soon as he entered the parlor she saw the cloud upon his brow, gloomy intention in his eye; something was upon his mind that he was resolved to be rid of. His greeting was brief, the prelude to something disagreeable, perhaps. Lou-i-sy, quicker and bolder than usual, thought that she divined the cause; indeed, she also had something upon her mind which she was resolved to be rid of. She would not be separated an instant, but crossed the room, and, with a tender-armed embrace, lifted to his a countenance lucent with candor. She was not given to demonstration. There was something now throughout her whole person that startled Loughborough into silence and into a kind of passionate pity. Words upon his lips were restrained. She spoke first in a delicate whisper,—

"Doctor, I have finished my wedding-dress. No

one has set a stitch in it but me. It is all mine; and I am yours as fast as if I had already worn and the preacher blessed me in it."

Entreaty was not habitual with Lou-i-sy. She entreated now, but Loughborough stood beside her dumb. Uninvited, she leaned her white temple against his shoulder and slipped a cold hand into his. What a moment for Loughborough!—upon his arm leaned his betrothed, another woman knocking at the door of his heart. She went on with innocent ramblings,—

"I laid it away in the best room. It looks so white and so pretty, I want you to see it, now, doctor; for, on our wedding-day, you might be too hurried, you know, to have half a glimpse. Dear heart, the time until then is wearisome. They've been trying to make me believe harm of you. But I'd shame to keep a secret from you, my husband a week come next Monday; for all that, I no more believe what they said than I'd believe God wouldn't hear me when I say my prayers."

Loughborough felt Lou-i-sy tremble and the hand his held turn colder. He heard a suffocating little sound, like the beginning of a sob, upon the words, "Oh, doctor, my dearie; it isn't only my love, but my life that is yours."

Her weight became heavier against him, and he opened his arms in time to receive her swooning into them. The heart plays fantastic tricks with human beings, and Lou-i-sy's had been under a strain. The relief her emotions found in speech brought exhaustion, a moment's unconsciousness, nothing more. A mere rush of blood headwards, righted almost immediately.

Very quickly Loughborough saw her open her eyes and smile contentedly when she saw herself sheltered in his arms. He forget himself—Diana, everything—in the physician's interest. He realized what Diana's delicate instinct had perceived sooner,—that there are women to whom a disappointment in love means death, and that Lou-i-sy was one of these.

Spring came, weaving a delicate embroidery of grass-spire over the Valley hillsides and of fruit-blossoms into the Valley orchards. Everywhere was an outbreathing of tenderly-timorous Beauty; but Diana, usually quick to perceive, had no eyes for it. The coloring seemed to her faint and spiritless, a pigment mixed with tears. What did she care for the delicate green lace stirred by spring's palpitating bosom? The world has agreed to the femineity of spring, deliciously sensuous, like youthful but self-conscious womanhood; full of languor, enervation, enticement, wantonness, alluring, subtly immodest, albeit innocent. Man is forever singing hymns to woman's delicately tempting carnality. When shall we stop this? for not until then shall we be pure. To Diana, spring was a mournful virgin of the Ophelia type. To Loughborough—well, we will not say. Probably he was hardly conscious of the season, thinking only of the date, hard and mechanical, which was to fix his wedding-day. Certain it is the three were preoccupied, and the dark cloud that had settled down seemed only to roll away when that day, notable in Loughborough's calendar, arrived.

They were married.

On the wedding-day Lou-i-sy attended to her house-

hold duties with usual precision; she saw to having the ham sliced, the currant-wine decanted, and the bride's-cake set out. Punctually, at the hour appointed for the ceremony, she was ready, with foot on the staircase, to descend. Diana held her back for a moment, to adjust the festoon of the blond wedding-veil; and, in doing so, kissed the warm cheek, in which, however, there was no unwonted flush, no quiver of nervousness. The truth was, Lou-i-sy Fawnystawk had been married in spirit months and months ago. In the ceremony she saw nothing but the demand for a little extra housekeeping and some prudent foresight. At the foot of the staircase stood Loughborough, paler than ordinary, his arms folded. He looked up, as the ladies stepped down towards him, and took in, first the vision of Diana, a breast-knot of cold, white blood-root blossoms in her bodice; then of Lou-i-sy, calm and fair, as one of the Virgins of the famous Madonna cabinet in the Dresden Gallery.

"Come, doctor," she said, when she was beside him, "I am ready. We've the ceremony, you mind, and the dinner, and the healths, and the train to catch."

Her hand was on his arm, and in a breathing-space they stood before the priest.

"She looks good enough to eat," was Miss Sarah Jane's verdict, when, after the service, this lady found herself sipping currant-wine in the dining-room.

"Relieved-like," answered Mrs. Spangler. "A weight off her mind, I should say. She's Mrs. Loughborough, now. Good luck to you, Mrs. Loughborough, and you, too, doctor. Yes, I'll see that V'nessy gets a bit o' weddin'-cake. The Lord bless you for all you've

done for her, doctor. Maybe she'll be a-sendin' you a bit o' hers, some day, eh?"

The good lady ha-haed, and there was no end of jokes, as is usual on like occasions.

Then came the time for leave-taking; for a minute, Loughborough and Diana stood together alone on the porch. He bent forward, took her two hands, and held them in the large warm grasp she knew so well. A volume seemed pent up in his eyes, but the words did not fall to his lips. Diana's eyes ran over him in liquid light. When he found voice at last, it was for a speech, commonplace, except for the sincerity which rang in his tone. "If ever you want a friend, Diana, I am your friend; if ever you want a home, Lou-i-sy's is yours. Will you remember?"

The shimmer of a gray dress, a gray-gloved hand on Loughborough's shoulder; it was the bride who had come up, unobserved. The hands of the other two fell apart, a chasm sunk darkly cruel between them, bridged by the one word—friend. It was such a bridge, narrow, sharp, a sword-blade, as Mahomet describes between heaven and earth. There was all the sweet monotonousness of childhood in the bride's voice when she added,—

"Yes, Diany, we both love you. Come and stay with us always, won't you? Then we have everything we want; then the doctor will find some one 'round able to talk to him better than I can. I can love and take care of him, but I'm not much for talking. Come, dear, do."

Diana's face, strained before, now quivered. She pressed to her, for a moment, the woman for whom she

had renounced so much, and then turned hastily aside to hide the tear that leaped from her eye.

Love is every man's and woman's birthright, but all do not get it; perhaps they do not work for it. He who wears love's wreath does so with smiling lips and glowing cheeks; he who does not, creeps through the world jaded and dreary. How was it to be with Diana?

CHAPTER XVII.

Dear Di,—I have not heard from you since you have been buried in the land of the rebel; but it is partly my fault, for I have been sick of myself and of everybody else. In this extremity, I turn to you, the freshest, most spontaneous, and adaptable of all my kinspeople. I am suddenly overcome with a longing to see you, to hear you play. I want to lie upon my lounge and be steeped in Chopin as you would embody him to me. I have been trying mind-cure and the graver studies. Unavailing. I began Grote; but it made me feel that the Spartans only were wise, because they abandoned to death their weak offspring, in order that they might not grow up to a wretched invalidism, as I have done. What seemed cruelty was, in reality, kindness. History makes me giddy, for I cannot see where seeming ends and reality begins. Thirty years of spinal complaining have made me morbid? Well, yes, I suppose so. But I could have been so happy, as happy as you, Di, with your straight limbs and your strong nerves. Yes, I am sure I was born for pleasure; but my enemy, a sickly body, has balked me of

it. I was born to have lovers, too. You need not smile, Diana, at my fifteen years of seniority. In matters of sentiment, there is no time, no age. Who would waste a thought, save one of pity, upon a puny lamester, such as I am, pinned year in, year out, to a couch of thorns. I have some pride,—no one should ever marry me for money. There was a man who tried to, once; so I drew him on and then exposed his avarice without pity. Detestable as this experience was, it stirred me to the liveliest sensations. It furnished me with the excitement which I had been craving; and when all was over, it made life for a while seem hopelessly flat. The doctor drops in, as he has done for years, prescribes and smiles, smiles and prescribes; so assured in his callousness, that he does not care a button if I think him a humbug. My heart, my mind, gnaws each upon itself. They tell me I want rest. What have I done since I was born, but rest? They tell me I want recreation. Oh, the aimlessness of the search after recreation! I hate the word. What I want is work—man's birthright; but even that is denied me, for I do not know how to find it. Had I been obliged to strive and to labor in the first years, I might, at least, have found peace. Happy is the man who finds his use in the world while he is still young. Is there a reason for the existence of every creature God has made? or are some allowed to live merely as sign-posts pointing the way—to be avoided by others? I am in New York. Will you come and give me the medicine of a fresh, young spirit?

Yours in depression,

CYNTHIA CURZEWELL.

Here was a chance of escape from Pughtown, with its painful memories. True, it was merely an exchange of depressing companionships; instead of Aunt Mary's meagre, unquestioning mournfulness, Cynthia Curzewell's wider, more analytic selfism was presented. Diana chose the latter.

She spent the first four weeks at Miss Curzewell's in endless playing upon the piano. The invalid, upon a straw lounge in an adjoining sitting-room, called for nocturne, mazurka, and polonaise. It was a carnival of melody, the very bacchanal of low spirits. Miss Curzewell relished this weirdness; for she held up a cracked mirror to nature, and saw a kind of picturesque monster reflected therein. But Chopin did not help Diana; she required something that appealed more to the mind. The mind is the best refrigerator for overheated feelings. She had gone the year before to Virginia vague and with the artist's instincts half-fledged. She had risen to the height of making a great sacrifice, and she felt as if she had been lifted for life. Renunciation is one of the greatest propellers of the soul; truly has it been said that "he who loses his life for my sake, shall find it." One morning, she turned over the leaves of a Beethoven album. Loughborough had spoken with admiration of this master. She worked for two hours; the result was, for the first time, a kind of wholesome seriousness taking the place of a desolation which had made her wildly restless.

"Diana," Miss Curzewell said, looking earnestly at the musician as she took her place upon a stool beside the invalid's lounge, "you threw your whole soul into that music. Do you know, it has done me good?"

"This is the only time that I have *thought;* for weeks, I have been feeling, nothing but feeling. Cynthia, music seems to be a measuring of the heart-throbs of the universe. When I play Chopin, my soul meets man's; when I play Beethoven, my soul meets God's. That is religion, and this is what I need more of, I suppose. I have been a heathen."

Miss Curzewell gave one of her deep sighs, and then said, suddenly, "Di, I will take you to Germany, and let you study there, if you will go; will you?"

Diana's hands went up to screen her face; her answer was a burst of tears; but the two ladies understood each other.

Did Loughborough and Diana meet? Yes, fifteen years later. Meanwhile, several fine boys came to enlarge his family. Was his life wrecked because he did not marry the woman his heart would have chosen when it spoke strongest within him? By no means. Men like Loughborough may fall, but they pick themselves up; they may go astray, but they do not suffer shipwreck; for them there's always land ahoy! As a physician, he stood among the first; and, perhaps, science gained in that sentiment lost something. However that may be, Lou-i-sy found no fault with him as a husband. And his native State was proud of him as a man; for the greater includes the less. A truly good man cannot fail in the lesser relationships of life.

Changes came from time to time in the Pughtown neighborhood, all of which were made known to Diana by faithful correspondents at home, Lou-i-sy chiefly. By a strange contrariety of fortune, Miss Mary Jane Fontaine married 'Lias Fawnystawk a year after

Lou-i-sy's union with Loughborough. The younger couple were going to remove to Richmond. 'Lias said he must have a housekeeper who would take the same interest in things as if they were her own. The choosing lay between Miss Sarah Jane and Miss Mary Jane. Mary Jane was the least objectionable.

"No, Lou-i-sy, child, I couldn't stand it with your Cousin 'Becca. Her tongue is as long as a fence-rail, and as lively as a mill-clapper. Miss Sarah Jane, she's so nervous-like, she'd keep me in a swivet, half my time. I haven't got many years to live, but I want them quiet ones; not a great coming in and going out, and such like. If *you* are got to leave me, I'm going to get the next quietest person I can find. Miss Mary Jane Fontaine are she. Her shoes don't creak, and she moves round the house nice and pleasant-like."

To Lou-i-sy's question, "Do you think she'd ever marry any one, pappy?" came the answer, "Yes. I ain't got this old and not to know what I'm a-talking about. I asked her once if she thought that sharing her misery would make it less, and she said, then, she thought maybe it would, and that if ever she had a call to marry, or share her lot in life with any one, she'd do just what the Lord told her to do; so I'll up to the Valley Farm this night and give her the Lord's message."

The Fates willed that Miss Mary Jane should marry; that Miss Sarah Jane should live on single; and that Grat Fontaine should die before gray hairs came to cloud the brilliancy of his burnished hair and beard. His death came about by his own ob-

stinacy,—a slight cold, for which Loughborough prescribed; for Grat got into the Legislature, and spent a winter in Richmond, near Lou-i-sy and her husband. Loughborough's orders were disregarded, his advice laughed at, his medicine not taken, and Grattan, one-sidedly clever, handsome, and pig-headed to the last, killed himself by sheer neglect. "It is a case of suicide," was Loughborough's verdict; "he treated his body as a slave instead of as a friend."

"Poor Uncle Grattan!" thought Diana, with tears, when she heard the news. "He has just missed being a great man, and all because of that cross-grained streak in him. Let me beware of that, for I am a Fontaine, too."

In the summer of 18—, Loughborough, *en route* for Paris, stopped over night at Baden-Baden. In the reading-room of the Hôtel de Bade he sat down to await the announcement of dinner. The only other occupant of the room was a gentleman, with head bent over a brochure. Presently, the latter tossed the pamphlet aside and stood up to indulge a yawn, which engulfed him. Out of this hygienic spasm he came, with eyes fixed upon Loughborough. Handing him the brochure with an exaggerated politeness, akin to burlesque, the stranger said, in fair English, "Will you read this, sir? The question is land monopoly. Well treated; by an A-*mair*-ican. One of your countrymen, I take it?" A jewelled hand sailed over a well-pomatumed head and then caressed a wide expanse of whiskers. Without waiting for answer, however, he went on. "A wonderful nation, the A-mair-ican. Such a weltanschau. It may be said to be the nation

that has invented Liberty, and not behind-hand in the arts, either. We have in this town, now, Mees Fontaine, the Beethoven interpreter. She gave us a concert, last night. Ravishing. You know her?"

Loughborough might have smiled at being thus caught in his nationality, without having uttered a word, on the witness of a moment's glance from a stranger; but his ear was absorbed with the name Fontaine. She was here. Where? how far off? The questions thronging to his mind were not put, and the Prussian proceeded to expatiate upon the distinguished artist, tossing off from his tongue a language enriched by numerous technical terms. Praise of the lady argued, on his part, knowledge of music, so he praised her. "Last night was an hour of enthusiasm. Chamber music; a Largo with Stroschki, the first violin of the Imperial orchestra; then a transcription by Liszt; that was *divine*. Scene-painting in music. Her chords give out a constellation of sparks; visible, you know; then the Harmonious Blacksmith was the encore. No Beethoven, last night. She says it is sacrilege to play him sometimes. These artists will have their moods; you must allow them, for the sake of the afflatus."

Loughborough was shocked into silence by this voluble wind-bag at his side. He could not help wondering whether the winsome girl of his memory had charged herself with the artist's jargon, too; and whether she glorified form and whim and mood. It was not the artist that made his pulse quicken and his eyes gather light and warmth; it was the woman. What had fifteen years done with her? Had they caressed or scourged, been friends or foes? How did

she appear to the casual observer,—her arms, her beautiful arms, the dainty chin of the girl of eighteen? He murmured something about a foreign country, the climate of Germany, ending with the point-blank question,—

"Does Miss Fontaine look well,—strong? I mean——"

The Prussian dismissed the question with a growl, a finger-snap, and then deigned the words, "Look! You cannot circumscribe an artist's look with a paltry word of one syllable. She looks a thousand ways in the course of a day; handsome, plain, dreamy, wistful, thoughtful, gay, frowning. She makes you reflect her feelings; she carries you along with her. She is a creature of sympathetic imagination, the true artist spirit, you know; but she works too hard, by heaven! The key-board is a willlow-branch in her hand. I have heard her give the Sonata Appassionata. It was wunderschön. Never have I heard such a climax from the woman's hand; but she works too hard, sir, by heaven!" (with a sudden turn). "How pure your A-mair-ican women are. Mees Fontaine is the soul of discreetness."

Two fingers of the Franco-Prussian's hand flew away from his lips with a kiss upon them. Loughborough's eyes put a direct question.

"Yes, the vair-y soul of discreetness. She counts her lovers upon the fingers of both hands, but she keeps them at a distance. Stroschki trembles in her presence,—when he is not playing, of course."

"Does Stroschki——?" Loughborough's words were blown into a thousand inaudible fragments by an

explosion of sputtering mirth which rolled out of the Prussian's sandy whiskers. "No, by George!" A cosmopolite, he indulged in expletives imported from every country, England preferred. "Stroschki would give his fiddle-bow, his Amanti, to be allowed a lover's privilege for one brief evening."

The stranger, no doubt, would have proceeded to the itemizing of a lover's privileges, had he been suffered; but Loughborough rose to his feet, and said, sententiously,—

"Where is Miss Fontaine, now? Do you know?"

"Do they admire the lady in A-mair-ica as we do here?"

The stranger was unwilling to lose a patient hearer. "Oh, yes; but she is not *there* much; she has lived in Europe mostly for the last fifteen years; but where is she staying, now, do you know?"

The information was given, and Loughborough repaired immediately to the private hotel where Miss Fontaine had apartments. Miss Curzwell was at home, but not Miss Fontaine. The servant had seen this lady, alone, book in hand, take the road to the Nymphen-See, her favorite retreat; perhaps she might be there.

Loughborough turned back to the street, and walked deliberately into a shop containing musical instruments. Here he purchased a flute, and then he, also, took the road to the Nymphen-See. Years of care, of scientific endeavor, of patient yet cheerful work, of self-suppression, fell away from him as at the word of magic. He strode along the valley of the Oos, flute in hand; sprang up a hill-side, black with

larch and spruce, and clambered along, in its odorous shade, to the wall of the ravine, into which he proceeded to descend. The Nymphen-See lay below,—a spot to long for when life overheats the brain and makes one desire passionately for coolness and the repose which falling water flings around it, resting and refreshing at the same moment. A ledge reached, Loughborough saw the lady he was seeking. She was seated upon a stone, in the very heart of the ravine; but the plash of the waterfall that drew from the pool its surplusage of water drowned the noise of his footsteps as he approached. He went lower and looked down into one of those closets which nature makes for a repository of inspirations, an oratory, a shrine, whatever you will, in which you may approach her. It was a spot where a muse might meet some favored mortal, where a lover might whisper his truest thought to his beloved. A tributary of the Oos had hollowed out of the rock a perfect chamber, and then had gathered itself into a deep, limpid, circular pool at the bottom, where a pavement of large round stones showed brilliantly. Into this pool water poured by means of a narrow mossy conduit, sculptured by the runnels themselves in the stone, while, as we have said, the excess of water emptied itself out of the pool by means of a charming waterfall, which wrought a way for itself over fantastic stones. The pool lay undisturbed by this waterfall, still, sparkling as a jewel, very slightly darkened by the spruce-trees, whose fringe-work decked the beautifully rounded cliffs above, and mingled spice with the penetrating odor of freshness distilled

from this mountain torrent. Loughborough felt excitement come in waves as he saw Diana alone, in this setting; but he raised his flute to his lips and began, with infinite delicacy, to pipe a ditty that fell, like a fancy in a dream, upon Diana's ear. He saw her bend forward, lift her head, her muscles tense, as these notes of "Lorina," inwoven with echoes and faint repeatings of the cliff touched her ear and sank deep in her heart. To make himself heard as reality, and not audible fancy, he leaped down to a lower crag which abutted from the cliff directly above her head, still fluting, the rock still repeating, as he went. She rose to her feet at last, under the lash of conviction, took a few steps forward, then backward, and rang out,—

"Loughborough!"

"Diana!" was rung back from a niche, above, in a low, familiar, thrilling voice, and this was no echo. Diana's eye, obeying her ear, took in the figure of a man, whose gray suit melted into the color of the rock, hardly a gunshot from her.

She held out her arms; he sprang at once to her side and looked earnestly, longingly, into her face, to note the changes he might see, the welcome he might discover therein. Our surroundings are so much a part of us that even feelings must be shaped to new settings. This was not Pughtown, but the Grand Duchy of Baden; not the Valley of the Shenandoah, but the Valley of the Oos. A meeting had been lived by Diana a multitude of times in the last fifteen years; but, now that it was really come about, it was to be commonplace, after all, like things that are mixed with

flesh and blood; not divine, as she had fancied. She gave her hand to be pressed, and sat down, with the question,—

"Where did you come from?"

"From that crag just above your head."

"Yes, of course, I know; but before that?"

"The medical convention."

"Ah, yes, at Berlin." A softly-breathed sigh, a wistful look, then one of reproach. "But why did you not let me know?"

"I came unexpectedly. Lou-i-sy *did* write."

"And the letter is probably at the Poste Restante, in Heidelberg, awaiting me! You are alone. Lou-i-sy not with you?"

The answer was a negative shake of the head. "Ah, but I wish I had known you were here." The sense of harmony in Diana made her shrink from being taken unawares, even in that which she desired before all other things.

"This meeting is a surprise to me, too, Diana; but are you not glad to see me again after these long fifteen years?"

"Yes, very glad, only it is so sudden." She raised her hand to her forehead as if to brush away some delusion caused by a dream; then with a swift transition to the one person she felt she must always keep in mind,—

"How is Lou-i-sy? Tell me about her. Has she changed?"

"Considerably stouter; older, too. We have all grown old, Diana."

"Yes, time has left none of us alone; the whole world may slight us, but not time."

He fixed her, for an instant, with his keen, observing glance, then turned away sharply, as if hurt by too much sunlight. He had perceived, however, in the hollows under her eyes, those faintly purplish lines indicating the strain of previous years.

Diana, on her part, had been embarrassed by the probing gaze; so she flew, by means of conversation, to his domestic affairs, showing an interest dangerously strained.

"Your boys, Dr. Loughborough; tell me about them. Who are they like?"

"All five have copied their mother's eyes and complexion; but their dispositions the rascals have stolen from me. They are an unruly set, Diana" (he laughed); "constant internal revolutions which start from absent-mindedness. We have a little girl now, too."

"Have you? I did not know. She is the youngest, then? And what have you called her? Is *she* like her mother, too?" Diana's brows were drawn and anxious. She imagined Loughborough's hand patting the set of little tow-heads, overtopping each other like steps. The Prussian might well have said that a thousand expressions succeeded each other upon her countenance in the course of a day; and the effect in the eyes is strange when jealousy treads upon the heels of tenderness.

"No, poor little unfortunate; they say she's like me, nose and all. She's named for her mother; but we call her Isa. Lou-i-sy in the first generation, Isa in the second, eh?"

Diana could not help smiling at Loughborough's good-humored irony; his home, his wife, his children

fascinated her; so she was still the questioner. "Is Lou-i-sy the same indefatigable housekeeper she used to be?"

"Yes; she attends to *our* domestic affairs, the church's, and all the poor people's in Richmond."

"Ah, she is a good woman. What an excellent wife you have, Dr. Loughborough."

Seeing that he was expected to answer, Loughborough said, "Yes," in rather a too downright way. Diana would have given anything in the world to know just how Loughborough stood with his wife; and perhaps the curiosity was pardonable, though she did not call it curiosity, but friendship.

"Have you brought Lou-i-sy around to your way of looking at things? She was always so docile, and yet so fixed in her ideas."

"It would be ungenerous to make too great demands upon a wife's dutifulness, Diana. Besides which, I never argue. Debate is, for the most part, a mere squabbling over terms and definitions; all very well for lawyers, but not for husband and wife."

After a silence lasting some minutes, Diana asked, suddenly,—

"Am I much changed too, Dr. Loughborough?"

"Changed, and not changed, Diana," was Loughborough's answer.

The physician could see that the woman had worked hard; that she had lost instead of gained flesh; there was a droop about the corners of the mouth, where they met the line which indents the cheek at it melting into the chin. This is the sign of much striving, and is dangerous to good looks. She was less pretty, more

interesting; less bewitching, more charming. There was less of allurement, yet more of power. At eighteen, women have passion; at thirty, their feelings put on wings and fly upward, under the name of sentiment. Passion is a beast, a war-horse, if you like, headstrong, violent; whereas sentiment is Pegasus, the horse that, having assumed wings, is able to mount.

There was a change in Loughborough, too, which Diana's eyes had been busily noting. She hardly regretted the wrinkles about the eyes, the greater prominence of the features, even an additional leatheriness of skin, for these imperfections marked but the more powerfully the sweet, strong, self-conquering nature which dwelt under them. Out of the vagueness of youth had come a startling definiteness; out of Chaos, Cosmos. Perhaps we do not realize that the work of creation is always taking place; we err in thinking that it is confined to a single supernatural act. Loughborough had grown into a definiteness which broke over his nature, like May over a landscape, bringing his virtues into grand relief. Diana's expression said something to this effect; whereupon it became Loughborough's turn to feel embarrassed. He began abruptly, by way of turning her thought from himself,—

"You have asked no question about McElroy. How is that? He was once a hero in your eyes."

"I know that he is married to Vanessa Spangler, and can infer the rest." (Her voice was freighted with indifference, seeing that she spoke of a man said to have been her hero once.) "Does he dream still?"

"Yes, an opium-dream, for the most part. Mrs.

McElroy runs their establishment. They have no child. McElroy sleeps half of his time, and, strange to say, keeps in fairly good health. Do you remember him with pleasure, Diana? He pleased you once, I think."

"Only my fancy, and fancy is a cold quality. I have often mistaken, in my life, the glamour for the thing it surrounded?"

"That is the artist's temptation. You have become a great artist. I thought you would. But have you made a god of your art?"

"A thousand times, no; but you influenced me, Dr. Loughborough. Do you remember how you gave me the new beatitude, Coleridge's 'Blessed is he that has found his true work.' I believe I have found mine; and, at first, I will admit to being intoxicated, and to not seeing the world clearly; afterwards, I rubbed my eyes, looked about me, and determined that, if I was to choose, I would rather develop into a well-rounded being than into even an artist. I have had to clip the wings of the artist that the woman might expand."

"And this is the result of fifteen years' devotion to music. You do not know how glad I am to hear you say this, Diana."

Loughborough smiled pleasure; and his watchful eyes were agreeable features to study, for they were ever guiding him to new discoveries. Just now his perceptions were pleased by her improved style in speech, of a crystalline clearness, sparkling out, occasionally, into jewelled utterances. He had always admired lucidity, candor, and those virtues translucent

to the splendid luminousness of Truth shining through them. She had chosen, as she said; once he had thought not wisely, but the choice had imparted a nobility to her nature which she had not shown in earliest youth; once she had nourished a religion caught in the toils of heredity, but her soul had triumphed over a stale faith, with the determination that it is better to love highly and lose, than less purely and wed. She had mounted, so that she and Loughborough now stood on a level, looking into each other's eyes.

"Yes," she pursued, "I would forget my notes this minute, rather than be the one-sided, deliciously-musical fool that——"

"That Stroschki is?"

Diana shook her head in the affirmative and laughed, but not gayly; a sombre hue darkened her countenance. "He is a violin on two legs; a man crazed with genius; who talks like a seraph about a fugue; like a grown-up-child about other things."

Loughborough, in reply to this, murmured something about rumors of her marriage, etc. Diana answered with a gesture of irritation before saying, "With Stroschki, do you mean? Every one speaks of us together. It is absurd. I thought you knew me better." Then in words solemnly staccato, and with eyes fixed intently upon him, she added, "Do you remember my telling you once that I should never marry? Did you not believe me when I said that?"

Loughborough had no answer to this question; words would have been coarse tools with which to express his feelings at this moment. All that was

sweetest and tenderest in his manhood went out to meet all that was sweetest and tenderest in her womanhood. Renunciation because of love flashed its white wing against his spirit. He bowed his head in token that he did remember.

"I set up for myself," she said, "a standard years ago. No man but one has ever reached it. He was not for me. I would have no other." Diana might have said more, but that her voice broke. It was a fatal moment for them both. Many men would have yielded to that ineffable longing. The kiss of passion, the whisper of love, would have found no witness in the eternal rocks and densely-black fir-trees around them. Nature alone was present, and nature urges to candor. But Loughborough was not to be tempted from his iron calm. If Diana had wished to try her power, it was but a moment's weakness, for the next she turned away, leaned over the stream, and dipped her fingers into the water as it purled along towards the cascade. Each sat spellbound in the other's presence, boundlessly free, yet chained absolutely as with fetters. Diana felt a long shudder pass through her companion; to the nice ear of sympathy, emotion is clearly manifested. Then he unloosed his arms and stood up. Diana rose, too, her eyes cast down under delicately tremulous lids. She was conscious of a hand upon her shoulder, and a voice in her ear which said, with the infinitude of tenderness,—

"I told you too, once, that love is eternal. God knows how true this is; but man is weak, Diana; and it is only in his conscious weakness that he finds his best strength." The fairy-like cascade broke its jewels

into the hollow stone, the stream pressed on restlessly, every sound of the water seemed a heart-throb; yet how eternally cold was the message delivered by the Nymphen-See, for the crackling of the tree-limbs, the crunching of feet against dry moss, and then a long, aching silence told Diana Fontaine that she was alone.

THE END.

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